

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



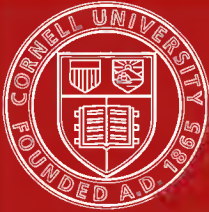
Cornell University Library
PR 4149.B44Z5

My eighty years.



3 1924 013 437 755

oan



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924013437755>

MY EIGHTY YEARS

MY EIGHTY YEARS

BY

ROBERT BLATCHFORD



CASELL & COMPANY LIMITED
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & SYDNEY

First Published . . . 1931

316250B

X

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

DEDICATED TO
MY DEVOTED DAUGHTERS
WINIFRID NORRIS BLATCHFORD
AND
DOROTHEA GLANVILLE BLATCHFORD

PREFACE

BY ALEXANDER M. THOMPSON

THE late Haldane Macfall said that "the most valuable asset of British journalism during the present generation has been Robert Blatchford. . . . When he knows, and he sees the people blundering, he gives tongue reckless of self or all advantage. He is incapable of a dishonesty, intellectual or moral." The distinguished novelist added: "I admit that it is a most unjournalistic quality—it is the journalist's job to 'make a story' at any price, but Blatchford is of the stern stuff that cannot be bought." Here we have set down in a few plain words the basic defect of the writer of this book. In the earliest days of his connexion with the *Sunday Chronicle*, I, as the managing editor of the paper, who had introduced Blatchford to journalism, was constantly harassed by his failure to understand the elementary principles of journalism. Mr. Hulton, the proprietor, Mr. Harris, the acting editor, and I, would carefully discuss what should be the subject of Blatchford's next article. I would convey the decision of the triumvirate to my friend in London. Instead of which he would blandly reply that he didn't care for the subject and couldn't agree with our views. This insubordinate attitude of a subordinate hack was quite a new idea in Witherby Grove and caused surprise. "If a man won't do what he's told——" said Harris, and shrugged his shoulders as who should say: "That ends it."

P R E F A C E

Wise old MacArthur, the editor of the *Sporting Chronicle*, though only a racing journalist, shrugged his shoulders too: "Yes, of course," he said, "but, by Jove, this Blatchford is a *MAN*." I would allay the proprietorial wrath by explaining that my poor friend was obviously mad—he didn't understand journalism—but, really, I was sure he meant well. "All right," Mr. Hulton would say, "let's see what he sends." I, tremendously relieved by the proprietorial magnanimity, would write to Blatchford instructing him to choose his subject for himself. But then would come a still more astounding staggerer. "I understood," said the arbitrary gent in London, "that my services would no longer be required. If I am to continue, the terms of my payment will have to be revised." Mr. Hulton was a shrewd man: they were.

So it went on till Blatchford was nominated as the Socialist candidate for East Bradford. Then Mr. Hulton put his foot down. He wasn't going to stand any more of this damned Socialism. "We'll have to start a paper of our own. Come on out of it." We had no money. I was drawing a big salary. Mr. Hulton offered me more to stay. It was altogether very inconvenient. My family didn't like giving up our big house in Manchester to take lodgings in a railway-porter's cottage. There were domestic differences. But there was Socialism, and there was Blatchford with his masterful, irresistible faith. Of course I came out of it.

There came anxious, distressful days. We lived on the brink of ruin. We were shunned by old friends as lepers. Blatchford worked as no writer ever worked before—writing "Merrie England," serial stories, leading articles, humorous sketches. But still the basic flaw in him survived. He nearly plunged us into a fatal libel action with a rich railway

P R E F A C E

company because he would insist on telling the truth about the condition of their wage slaves. He ran counter to the policies of the Socialist leaders—Keir Hardie and Bernard Shaw—by starting a Labour Party on independent lines, with a clause barring compromise with either of the old parties—a clause which ultimately produced a Labour Government. When, after many touch-and-go hazards of shipwreck, we ran into smooth waters, he suddenly burst into a furious campaign against orthodox religion. I argued, I implored. This was none of our business. It would estrange thousands of our supporters. “I can’t help it,” he answered; “it has to be said. It may smash us, but I’ve got to say it.” What can a sane managing editor do with a reckless desperado who never gives a flick of his fingers for expediency, but insists on fighting wherever he scents an enemy?

Then came the Great War. Here was no divided counsel between us. Once in, we both agreed, there was no way out except by victory or defeat of all the social purposes we had spent our lives to achieve. On that, let Blatchford speak for himself. The result of our “patriotic” stand was that the *Clarion* dropped from a circulation of over sixty thousand to ten thousand. We had to close down. What our enemies had failed to do, our “comrades” achieved. The *Literary Digest* of New York said of Blatchford’s warning of the war’s approach that “since the days when Demosthenes thundered forth his warnings in the ears of the decadent Athenians, no more eloquent and patriotic appeals have been made.” But the effect on the Labour Party, we were told in its official organ, was to make it “rock with laughter.” That finished Blatchford’s connexion with the party he had created.

By all tokens of greatness made known to me in biographies of famous men, and in contact with

P R E F A C E

illustrious idols of the time, Robert Blatchford, despite his contrariness as a journalist, is the greatest man I have known. If greatness is a quality of the heart, alive with splendid sympathies, not behind its age but just far enough ahead to lead its march, Robert Blatchford is a great man. In the thirty years of his fighting period, between 1890 and 1920, he has done more to improve the lot of our people than any statesman, general, or man of letters. Gilbert Chesterton has said:

Very few intellectual swords have left such a mark on our time, have cut so deep or remained so clean. . . . His case for Socialism, as far as it goes, is so clear and simple that anyone would understand it, when it was put properly; his genius was that he could put it properly . . . his triumphs were triumphs of strong style, native pathos, and picturesque metaphor; his very lucidity was a generous sympathy with simple minds. . . . For the rest, he has triumphed by being honest and by not being afraid.

Bernard Shaw said:

There are few men who can write as Nunquam does, with conscience and strong feeling; and yet without malice. Above all, he has that power of getting at other people's point of view which enables him, when he is not writing persuasives to Socialism, to follow the trade of Shakespeare and Dickens.

Lord Northcliffe once told me of *his* first meeting with Blatchford. The latter was writing a series of articles on the war in the *Weekly Dispatch*, and Northcliffe had motored specially to Horsham to tell him some facts which might modify his opinions. "But," said Northcliffe to me, "after I'd told him all about it, he just repeated what he'd said before I began! He's more like a stubborn old Tory squire than a live journalist." Lord Northcliffe had evidently come up against Blatchford's journalistic drawbacks.

An "arbitrary gent," obstinate in his beliefs, and fierce with the battle-axe in defending them. A man of moods, tender at one moment as a woman,

P R E F A C E

gentle as a child; and then, at a word, the steely fighting glint transforms the eyes, the whole face hardens on the instant, the voice that chortled a moment before rasps huskily, with aggressive challenge in the tone.

One of his most remarkable characteristics is the vivid freshness of his remembrance and receptivity: he will tell you of an incident that happened in his soldier days, nearly sixty years ago, with such circumstantiality of detail, and such keen enjoyment of its humour, as if it had happened yesterday; or, having "discovered" a sympathetic author of antique lore, though he be as ancient and hackneyed as Homer, he will convey the charm of that writer with a newness of zest that will make him live and throb and thrill again as a vital man of the moment.

He observes closely, sees strongly, feels intensely. His likes and dislikes are definite and deep. I told him one day that he saw all things in *couleur de rose* or lampblack. "Well," said he, "that's better than seeing everything in dirty drabs or smudgy greys."

Opponents in controversy who have pictured Blatchford as a truculent "agitator" and "infidel," would marvel to hear him talk at his own fireside of such favourite authors as Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne, Selden, Bunyan, Montaigne, or Epictetus. In the evening ease of his arm-chair, with a pipe and a glass and a congenial friend or two, the old Berserker of debate is "the mildest-mannered pirate that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, Darwin's friendly rival in the exposition of the principles of Evolution, sent me, many years ago, the following "estimate" of R. B.'s character deduced from a photograph hanging over Wallace's writing-table by a phrenologist who had never heard of "Nunquam" or ever seen the *Clarion*.

P R E F A C E

1. Veneration of all that is good.
2. Practical; a good worker.
3. Has constructiveness, but has not cultivated it.
4. Would have made a good sculptor.
5. Is a critic rather than a doer.
6. Is not politic, not secretive enough, and often offends people he does not respect.
7. Moral sentiments strong; is essentially religious.
8. His intellect is good. He would be a good mathematician, but it has not developed.
9. He is by nature a poet, and if he does not write poetry he writes prose as good as poetry; he describes nature poetically.
10. He has some inherited sensuality, but it has been overcome.
11. *Whatever he thinks ought to be done, he does.*
12. The good and beautiful by nature is to him God. He might be a missionary. He is a missionary to the ignorant. He works for his fellow-creatures with thoroughness and enthusiasm.

For a guess, that was a wonderfully good guess. One equally just was written by Major Macfall, the author of "The History of Painting," who, I think, never met Blatchford. He said:

Blatchford's chief charm as a writer is that he wins into our affections. . . . Blatchford in all he writes is impelled always by a great human kindness and love of man. . . . Incapable of a dishonesty, intellectual or moral, loving the people with a great love, he never hesitates to whip its follies or to point out its weaknesses. Blatchford cannot be bought . . . the sad part of his splendid achievement for the good of man, the part of it that touches well-nigh the hem of the tragic, is that his broad humanity should have had to take up the sword—that this fervent lover of freedom and singer of the glory of peace should have had to put on the armour of the crusader and call civilization to battle.

Well, I introduced Blatchford to journalism, and he, in his turn—*comme un plaisir en vaut un autre*—introduced me to Socialism, or rather to the system of altruism, rooted in love of this country and its people, which he expounded in "Merrie England." The topmost distinction of my distinguished career is the dedication on the title-page of that book. I first saw it quite accidentally in Manchester; and if

P R E F A C E

ever I should be so misguided as to make a speech, and to state—as men always do when they make speeches—that “This is the proudest moment of my life,” I shall be guilty of perfidy to the emotion inspired in me that day by those three lines in my friend’s writing.

There issued from our little room in Corporation Street, Manchester, a million copies of “Merrie England.” There were probably as many more pirated copies sold in America, and countless thousands more through Welsh, Dutch, German, Scandinavian, and Spanish editions. We made no profit out of the sale, but we secured our object by making converts. A year before its issue there were not 500 Socialists in Lancashire; twelve months after there were 50,000. A census taken at the time in a North of England Labour Club showed that forty-nine members out of fifty had been “converted” by “Merrie England.” As the *Manchester Guardian* lately said: “For every convert made by ‘Das Kapital,’ there were a hundred made by ‘Merrie England.’” W. T. Stead, reviewing the book in *The Review of Reviews*, hailed Blatchford as “the first genuine spokesman of the enfranchised working classes.” “Merrie England” smashed the Manchester School of political economy of *laissez-faire*.

Forty Labour members were returned to Parliament in 1910. I was away in the North seeking a comedian for a musical comedy. When I returned to London I found the *Clarion* about to issue without a word concerning the General Election. Blatchford had not noticed that an election was on. Politics never interested him. “A political Labour paper,” he wrote me, “leaves me cold. It is all the difference between a rose garden and a cabbage patch. I cannot enthuse about cabbages.” And again: “Convince the people and never mind parties.”

P R E F A C E

He will read the report of a Lancashire and Yorkshire cricket match with avidity, but he never knows anything about murders, divorces or Stock Exchange panics. He has no financial interests, and knows nothing of markets in pork, pig iron, or Pigg's Peaks. He never goes to a theatre, concert, or cinema—only occasionally to the British Museum. For weeks at a time he never steps outside his front door, but stays at home painting pictures, reading books, or listening to his daughter's playing of Bach's fugues.

An impossible man—and, as I have shown, utterly hopeless as a journalist. But he has been my friend for nearly fifty years, in the fullest sense of the schoolboy's definition: "A chap what knows all about you, and yet he likes you."

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
AUTHOR'S PRELUDE	xvii
1. MOTHER	1
2. THE POND	7
3. BOGY NICHOLAS	10
4. MY THEATRICAL CAREER	17
5. SOME AMIABLES	25
6. EMILY.	34
7. THE YOUNG IDEA	36
8. HALIFAX	43
9. SALLY	46
10. ROMANCE	51
11. OPT IN THE STILLY NIGHT	54
12. THE LEAN HIGHWAY	62
13. LIGHTS OF LONDON	70
14. THE QUEEN'S SHILLING	76
15. COMRADES ALL	82
16. "OURS"	85
17. ANACREONTIC	88
18. <i>THE</i> SERGEANT-MAJOR	92
19. ODD FELLOWS	97
20. PARADISE	101
21. BEMBRIDGE FORT.	104
22. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN	108
23. AN IRISH DR. PAINE	112
24. LADIES OF SORROW	118
25. A TRAGEDY IN BLOCK B	122
26. FRESH FIELDS	124

CONTENTS

	PAGE
27. NEWPORT, MON.	128
28. BAD BARGAINS	132
29. OLD WAR DOGS	137
30. MOLL AND JOHN	141
31. THE PLEASURES OF THE CHASE	149
32. DISCHARGE	152
33. OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY.	154
34. CHESTER CASTLE	161
35. THE GREAT ADVENTURE	164
36. THE FOURTH ESTATE	171
37. PONTIFEX II	175
38. THE NEW PAPER	180
39. THE SLUMS.	186
40. CHECK	191
41. THE <i>CLARION</i>	195
42. THE MOVEMENT.	199
43. THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK	209
44. DAMOSELS AND DRAGONS	214
45. REASON AND THE REDS.	218
46. THE DRUMS OF WAR	221
47. WAR	230
48. SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE	238
49. WHO CAUSED THE WAR?	243
50. THE <i>SUNDAY CHRONICLE</i> AGAIN	249
51. MY LAST CHRISTMAS SHOPPING	252
52. THE SOMME	255
53. A CHANGE OF FAITH	260
54. PERSONALIA	267
55. LOOKING BACKWARD	271
INDEX.	277

AUTHOR'S PRELUDE

MONTAIGNE touches shrewdly one of the autobiographer's difficulties: "When all is summed up a man never speaks of himself without loss. A man's accusations of himself are always believed; his praises never."

But it is worse than that, at least for a modern, for amongst us it is thought bad taste for a man to speak of himself at all. Still, it is permitted to write of women and men we have met and of things we have seen, provided we do not thrust our own ego grossly forward. One may, given due measure of tact and modesty, tell the story of one's life without offensive claims or confessions. And that is what this book must be: a story, true in substance and in fact. If it turn out to be a love story that may not be an unpardonable fault, since most lives would, to greater or less extent, fall under such a classification, and a real love story, honestly told, without sentimentality or vainglory, may prove interesting, or at worst amusing, to one's fellow-creatures.

But here again the unwritten law obstructs the way: a man must not praise his own wife. "It is not done." Shall I be forgiven if I say that seems to me a defect in many autobiographies? Why, when the Great Panjandrum stands in the limelight basking in applause, should Mrs. Panjandrum be hidden behind the curtain in a private box? Did she not help him; is it not even possible that she made him? And who can write a love story without a lady; and

why must a life's history be robbed of the love interest? From the age of sixteen, when I first met my heroine, till the age of seventy, when I lost her, I lived for her. If I leave her out I am reduced to the strait of the needy knife-grinder. Besides, she was much nicer than I, and I would rather write of her than of myself. I liked her better.

I had a dog who worshipped me. He would lie in a chair and gaze at me over the arm with adoring eyes. I used to feel ashamed to think how little I deserved such devotion. Did you ever hold a live song-thrush in your hand? There is a thrill in the soft resilience of the spangled breast and folded wings, and the luminous eyes of the wild creature, dilated with fear, are full of an intimate appeal. But to hold in one's hand the white soul of a woman; to be dowered with the life's service and devotion of *the* woman and not give thanks, is too stern a demand upon one's reticence. There! I have broken the rules already. I am bragging like one of Homer's heroes. I am blatantly boasting, claiming to have won a prize more honourable than a baton or a crown. And at my age!

Anatole France said: "Time, as it flies, kills our most ardent and tender sentiments . . . it destroys love and love's pretty follies." I must make bold to differ from the Master. I look back upon those pretty follies with reverence and thankfulness. I remember how a foolish lover and his lass walked many delectable miles along dark muddy roads in the smoke-stained winter rain, linked happily arm in arm. Love may be a fools' paradise, but it is the only paradise we know on this troubled planet.

The little precious gifts, the lingering clasp of tiny fingers, the wet curl clinging to the rounded cheek, which the rain has stung to rosiness, the whispered word and bashful answer; whiffs of scent and ripples

of song, a treasured ribbon, a hoarded flower; are these among love's pretty follies? What would you price them at, to-day, in solid gold, my fellow-fogies?

What? A good woman loved you, married you, gave herself to you, lived with you, and you are not to speak of her! Consider, though, how many of our imperfect brothers have been so blessed of heaven and never realized it. And you must not spread the cloak or bend the knee to *your* queen. "It is not done." I'm sorry, for in its proper time and place, I shall have to do it.

My old friend A. M. Thompson, reviewing a novel I had written, said: "If I were asked what is the dominant note of the book, I should answer, Love. It is a tale of war and battle; but the permeating influence is that of Woman and the dominant effect is one of tenderness. That is the phenomenon which makes this a wonderful book; the visible, stage-monopolizing Hamlet is here the shadow and the transient ghost behind the scenes; the Spirit of the Eternal Feminine is the reality which gives the play all its character, colour and glow."

I give that quotation for a warning. That is the kind of author who is trying to write this autobiography. There will be other innovations: wait till you see my chapter on Mother-in-Law.

MY EIGHTY YEARS

I

MOTHER

ON St. Patrick's Day of 1851 the eternal Saki, engaged at his own good pleasure pouring out "millions of bubbles like us," poured out me. Looking back along the barren, fertile, wintry, sunny road of my pilgrim's progress I can say, after seventy-nine years, I am glad I came.

In my seventieth year a gipsy stopped me on the highway and offered to tell my fortune. She said: "You are a lucky gentleman; born to be lucky." She thought perhaps I had not had time to find that out for myself. I gave her a smile and crossed her palm with silver, but declined her tendered prophecy. At my age, I reminded her, one hesitates to probe too curiously into the future.

But yes, I have been lucky. Some time ago a magazine editor asked me to contribute to a symposium in which a considerable number of successful men were asked to what they attributed their success. I answered on a post-card: "I attribute my success, such as it is, to luck, and I shall be the only contributor who will give that explanation." And I was. When the symposium appeared I was greatly edified by the confessions of the other successful gentlemen. They were "good soldiers and tall fellows" to a man, so that

I was proud to be of their company. Still, I could not help feeling that perhaps my gipsy was a better guesser than most of them.

Luck, or chance, plays a bigger part in our lives than we are willing to admit. When I was ten my mother had the choice of two engagements and asked us boys to decide, and as we knew Halifax and did not know the other town we chose Halifax. Had we gone to the other town we should never have met the girls we married. As to that marriage again. My wife was a mechanic's daughter. At the age of fifteen, going to look for work, she fell in with a girl who worked where I worked. That chance meeting—what did it mean to our lives? Again, when my army friend, Norris, went to work in Manchester he got lodgings at the house of a youth named A. M. Thompson, who had just got his first job on the Press. Norris told Thompson I was a literary genius and brought us together. Chance, luck! Thompson got me my first start as a journalist. We have been comrades for nearly fifty years.

My father died before I was two years old and I was brought up by my mother. She was a good mother and did her best for us according to her lights, but she made one mistake: she apprenticed my brother and me to trades. Remembering her own bitter experience of the stage she was determined that we should have some sort of steady work and regular wages. We developed other ideas. I was put to brushmaking, and as, like Kate in the *Tempest*, "I loved not the savour of tar nor of pitch," I very soon made up my mind that directly I was old enough I would go and seek my fortune. Which I did, and somewhat to the astonishment of my family, ultimately found it.

My mother was a good mother. Left at thirty-two years of age a widow with two little boys, she had a hard struggle and a long one and we knew some

lean years. But she was courageous and faithful and did not marry again, but kept us until we could keep ourselves and taught us as well as she was able. She taught us her own simple religion and made us understand the nature and habits of gentlemen. When I at last kicked over the traces and went into the Army she gave me the valuable and characteristic admonition: "Mind you never forget you are a gentleman."

Perhaps it will be well if I give here the description of my mother which I wrote for Mr. A. Neil Lyons when he was working at a short history of my life. One supplementary word: she was only half Italian in blood, her mother having been English. But she was absolutely Italian in appearance and, I might add without exaggeration, in temperament.

My mother was a little woman, with square shoulders; slim and light on her feet. You may see the picture of her, face and figure, at any Italian fruit-stall. She had abundant black hair, hazel eyes, black eyebrows, like smears, large, white, even teeth, a heavy mouth and jaw.

She had a good mezzo voice and as a young woman sang well. In temperament she was very mixed and elusive—very Italian. She had high spirits (when not in the dumps), was witty and bright, with a ringing voluminous laugh that hung on the hair-trigger. She was not a good-tempered woman. Her moods were too uncertain. She would be angelic for weeks and then the nether fires would burn up and she was impossible for a day or two. She was odd, too; had an abrupt and whimsical address, suggestive of Betsy Trotwood. Her religion and politics seem to me at this day to have been weird. But I think she got them from my father who was low church and an admirer of Sir Robert Peel.

My mother was not quite an educated woman.

But she was the daughter of a composer, had been brought up in artistic circles and on the stage; and she talked well and her English was correct and she read a good deal—mostly fiction.

But she was in no sense Bohemian, being correct and strict, and she did not like the stage. Her aversion to the idea of her sons being actors was very strong, and she made great sacrifices and worked very hard to keep us from any Bohemian environment.

She taught us her political and religious creed and used to sing and read to us and tell us stories. She hated humbug and snobbery and was rather satirical and not at all romantic. She was compassionate and generous and loved children and animals. Her cat followed her to church, her chickens slept on the hearthrug, and the milkman's horse would stop her in the street and ask for cakes.

She was brave and obstinate and persevering and practical and she wore the oddest bonnets. She could be delightful, but she was difficult to live with and she had an active and wounding tongue.

She was a clever woman, but had never had a chance. She had a natural talent for drawing and an equally natural gift of language. Just an impulsive, unreasonable, clever, wilful, quick-tempered, affectionate, pleasing, exasperating, funny little Italian woman; proud, honourable, and devoted to her children.

When she was displeased my mother had a short way with the offender. Once in a northern town the vicar called. He began by expressing surprise that we were not in bed. He understood, he said, that theatrical people turned night into day and day into night. Mother sat up stiffly, but made no answer, and the vicar went on to make one or two more equally tactful remarks and got a surprise. Mother rose up, making the most of her four feet ten inches, glared

at him balefully with her Italian eyes, and pointing dramatically said: "There's the door. Go. And if you have the impertinence to come again I will box your ears." After that we were left without spiritual consolation.

As I have said, she hated snobbery. Dining with some of her relatives who had "got on" there was some talk about an Italian baron who was claimed as an ancestor. My mother shocked the genteel company by declaring firmly: "Baron Fiddlesticks: my grandfather was a Roman pie man." This meant Domenico Corri, the musician, who had been a pastry-cook's apprentice and was taken up and educated by a cardinal, whom his beautiful voice and artistic singing had surprised and pleased. So runs the legend.

One of Mother's peculiarities was a fondness for hyperbole. If she scratched herself with a pin she cried out, "Oh, I have torn a great piece out of my finger!" Staying with me in Northwich she asked one morning, "What is that mob of children doing in our yard?" I looked out of the window and saw three small tots of girls who had come to visit my two-year-old daughter. She would speak of the conduct of an actor who was reported to have said something unfriendly behind her back as "the diabolical mendacity of that despicable blackguard, Perks;" and instead of saying so-and-so was a trial or a nuisance she would declare that he was "the curse of her existence." This kind of rhetoric was disconcerting when she employed it in her maternal admonitions of her sons. I remember her saying to me, "Mont [my brother] will be riding in his carriage when you are running behind." On another occasion she told my brother: "Bob will live where you will starve; there's no room in this world for lazy trollops who throw away their chances." This was pretty Fanny's way and we never took it seriously.

MY EIGHTY YEARS

Like many other parents, Mother never realized that we had grown up. Years after we were married and had children of our own she would scold us and threaten us as if we were boys. When we were young men she had a great opinion of my brother's artistic talents, but my mental endowment left her cold. She used to say, "You are just a splendid young animal," though sometimes she would add, "But you have some industry and that may help you." I don't think she ever got over the surprise when she recognized that I was not what she called "a dunder-head." What she would have said to me if she had lived in the combative years when I was fighting for unpopular causes I tremble to think.

THE POND

MAIDSTONE, my native town, is only a name to me. We left it when I was a few weeks old and I have not seen it since. My earliest place memory is of a little cottage with a little garden where marigolds and sweet Alice grew, and of green meadows and a singing brook and a gentle hill and a shaded pond; all of which return to me like pictures from a dream: especially the pond.

I do not know in what county or near what town that pond was situated, nor in what year I lived with my mother in the cottage as tenants of a working tailor, whose name I have lost. But I was, I think, about four years of age when I went with some bigger boys to play by the pond.

One of the boys explained to me the nature of the game. There were frogs in the pond. If one threw stones enough these frogs rose to the surface, and climbing on to stones or floating boughs of trees, put up their fore-paws in an attitude of supplication. This marvellously tickled the boys' sense of humour, and amid shouts of delighted laughter they ended the sport by stoning the frogs to death. We English are great sportsmen.

I was too young and tender to appreciate that game, but I was not too young and tender to detest those boys, and I never played with them again. No: I played with the girls. The girls did not kill helpless

animals; the girls were nice to me. Perhaps that is one reason why I have always liked girls of all ages. Though, as the epilogue says in *As You Like It*: "I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them."

The bigger girls, young women of six or seven, used to roll me down the little green slope, which was great fun, or decorate me with daisy chains, or hold buttercups under my chin to see if I should have much gold, or tell me stories, or help me gather cresses at the brook. Imagine it: Sergeant Robert Blatchford! The youngest of those darlings, the tailor's little daughter, named Polly, was my closest friend and most frequent companion.

I think we were happy in a childish way; but not for long. One day Polly wandered off by the hedgerow and ate some poison berries, and she died.

They took me to see Polly in her little white bed, where she lay so pale and still. There were flowers on the counterpane. The child lying there with a faint smile on her baby mouth was sweetly pretty. I do not think I was afraid, but I was awed. The hush and the beauty made an impression on me which has not faded yet. And on that scene the curtain falls. The garden and the meadow, the brook and the pond, and the little white face so solemn and so pure are all I can bring back out of that past of seventy-five years ago.

The child of fiction is seldom convincing. Partly because authors usually draw children from observation instead of from memory. This method results in pictures of the little people as seen by grown-up eyes, and any one of us who can remember his own childhood will know that grown-up eyes never see the real child at all. What they do see is the child on parade. The child as he accommodates himself to the inscrutable discipline of grown-up ethics and deportment. A child in the presence of adults is a

child in a mask and cloak of shyness and reserve and suspicion. No one ever really knows or understands a child except the child itself. That being so, the only sure source of child lore is one's own memory of one's own childhood, and it is a rather strange fact that not one grown-up person in fifty can remember his childhood, or ever cares to try. It will, I think, be quite safe to infer that the best child portraits in literature are largely autobiographical. One feels it to be so in the case of such successful literary children as David Copperfield and Tom Sawyer. It is obviously the case with the children of Monsieur Anatole France. In "Little Pierre," as in "Pierre Nozierre" and "My Friends' Book," the great French wizard uses the autobiographical form, and gives us pictures of his own childhood reflected in the magic mirror of his consummately graceful art.

Little Pierre is absolutely convincing to me, for he is shy and imaginative and sceptical as I was myself, so that when he tells of his dreams, his fears, his blunders, and gives his impressions of scenes and persons and animals, I feel as though he were writing beautifully and sympathetically about me. I have a similar feeling about the childhood of David Copperfield, but not about that of Tom Sawyer. Tom was not my kind of child.

Anatole France knows little Pierre better than little Pierre knew himself, and it is one of the charms of this book that the wise old author, with his ripe wisdom and delicate irony, stands by like a Greek Chorus to solve the enigmas which foiled him as a child, and to smile tenderly over the terrors which, to little Pierre, were so alarmingly real.

Little children are imaginative and impressionable. I have seen death many times: but the memory of little Polly, white and pure as the flowers around her, is still vivid in my mind.

III

BOGY NICHOLAS

THE Crimean War is one of my earliest recollections. I am speaking of the year 1855, when I was a child of four. To begin with I must mention some of the changes, just for the sake of local colour. We are so accustomed to our modern conveniences, luxuries, and amusements that we forget how very modern some of them are.

In my fourth year, then, there was no German Empire, or French Republic, and Japan was not a Power. There was no Manchester Ship Canal, no Panama or Suez Canal; no Mont Cenis Tunnel. There were no steel or iron ships, no huge ocean liners, no armoured ships of war.

There were no trams, or tubes, or underground railways; no motor-cars, motor-lorries, motor-buses or taxis. There were no corridor trains, or restaurant or sleeping cars. There were no telephones, no wireless. There was no parcels post; there were no letter cards or post-cards. There were no bicycles. There was no Atlantic cable. There was no compulsory education; there were no School Boards or County Councils. There was no household or women's suffrage. There was no influenza!

There was no petrol and, I think, no paraffin; gas was in its infancy. There were no incandescent lights. There were no steam or motor ploughs, no reapers or binders; no sewing machines, no wringing or wash-

ing machines, no gas stoves, no electric cookers, no knife-cleaners, no electric lights or bells, no safety razors, no typewriters. There were, I think, no anti-septics, nor was there any radium or X-ray treatment.

There was no Darwinian theory of evolution!

There were no aeroplanes or cinemas or gramophones. There was no popular football, no English golf, no lawn tennis. There was no Australian cricket team and no Australian army. There were no glove fights; prize fights were the vogue. There were no Bank Holidays, no cigarettes, no chocolates, no bananas.

The "good" old days!

There were no Boy Scouts, there was no Salvation Army. There were no knicker suits for boys, no felt hats, no panamas. There were no music-halls, as we know them. There was no Gilbert and Sullivan opera; no Ibsen, Wagner, or Grieg. The literary world of that day did not know Mark Twain, Anatole France, Thomas Hardy, Victor Hugo, Swinburne, Morris, Kipling, Henry James, or Omar Khayyám.

King George, the Kaiser, President Wilson; Lords Kitchener, Haig, and Beatty were not born. Foch and Hindenburg were babies. The public had never heard the names of W. G. Grace, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Sherlock Holmes, or Queen Alexandra. Lord Roberts was a subaltern officer, and the limelight of fame had not yet shone upon such now famous men as Bismarck, Moltke, President Lincoln, Cecil Rhodes, Charles Darwin, Garibaldi, Gladstone, Beaconsfield, and Parnell.

London then had no Thames Embankment, no Albert Hall, no Natural History Museum, no Tate Gallery. There were tolls on some of the bridges, debtors' prisons were still open, public executions took place; the Tower Bridge and Blackwall Tunnel were undreamed of.

Oysters were sold from barrows in the streets at sixpence a dozen, Charles Peace and Crippen were innocent schoolboys, and the iron-wheeled horse-traffic clattered hideously along the stony thoroughfares.

The Crimean War is the first war I remember. Since then we have had the Indian Mutiny, the Chinese and Burmese Wars, the Franco-Austrian War, the American Civil War, the Prusso-Danish, Austro-Prussian, the Franco-German War, the wars between Russia and Turkey, and Japan and China, Japan and Russia, America and Spain, the several Balkan struggles in which Serbia, Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria were concerned, our own wars in Afghanistan, Ashantee, Zululand and the Soudan, the two Boer Wars and the great European Armageddon. Quite a lot of turbulent water has gone under the bridge since 1855, and there were heaps of things we did not know when I was a child of four.

But imagine it! No football, no golf, no tennis, no bicycles, no sewing machines, no typewriters, no electric light, no ocean cables, no cinemas, no gramophones, no taxis, no cheap books or papers, no chocolates, no cigarettes and no bananas! What a funny England it must have been!

Well; it was. But to my childish mind it was a wonderland; a strange, rose-tinted, dreamy, fairy region, surrounded by fierce-eyed snarling terrors. That wistful, wondering outlook and the atmosphere of mystery and strangeness are very difficult to reconstruct. I lived for the most part in an imaginary world. To my sensitive, shrinking mind the street was a vulgar turmoil of traffic; the music to the march of the grown-up giants. It was a place unknown and dangerous, for to stray but fifty yards from our sheltering front door was to be lost.

A child perforce looks up at things the man looks down upon. A boy of sixteen is a giant, a woman is an overwhelming force, a bed has to be climbed into and may be fallen out of, a game-cock is a fierce creature of doubtful intentions, his red wattles and curved beak reach more than shoulder-high.

To a child the boundaries of fact and fiction are ambiguous; old King Cole is as real as King George, and a mermaid no more remarkable than a policeman. Children inhabit a world of make-believe. They scalp Indians behind the dahlias, and hunt bears in the lobby while the maid washes the oilcloth. They are lords and ladies, smugglers, soldiers, trains, fairies or lions most of their waking hours. They will be pirate kings or admirals, and have their ears boxed "without prejudice." They will stop roaring as a lion to call out "Yes, Ma," and will then go on roaring, "as it would do any man's heart good to hear them."

I knew there was a war in Russia, but had no idea where Russia was. The Cossacks, with their long spears, as the picture papers showed them, riding through a burning village, might have been round the nearest corner of our street for all I knew to the contrary.

What was to prevent the Emperor Nicholas from coming down my bedroom chimney, like Father Christmas? Silly maids used to scare children with "Nicholas will get you." The Czar of Russia was the *bête noire* of the period. Who was to protect me from that awful monarch as I lay in bed at night? What defence had I, with my mother away at the theatre? I used to dream of the Cossacks and wake in a cold perspiration in my room alone.

In that room a small glim of gas was left lighted. I would lie and gaze at it in fascination. It looked like a sparky, blue eye. How was a kid to be sure

it was not the eye of a wild beast, or a demon? Then there were the shadows. Sometimes in the night the fire would blaze up and the flickering flames would make sudden lights dance on the ceiling, and would cause dense, sombre shadow-shapes to leap out like savage monsters from the jungle. Then I dived under the bedclothes for safety until I fell asleep to dream again of the dreaded Cossacks.

While I was shivering and dreaming in my lonely bed, Private William Riley and Private Harrison were fighting the enemies of my country in the Crimea. Riley was wounded at Inkerman and killed the Russian who wounded him; Harrison got a medal for some deed of daring on the Woronzof Road.

Nineteen years later Harrison and Riley were on duty as military police, along with two other veterans, in Newport, when the frightened baby, now developed into the sergeant of the picket, came along and ran in all four of them for being drunk on duty. What a world!

My earliest years were thrilled with warlike influences. My uncle was bandmaster on the *Odin* frigate in the Baltic. Many of my mother's friends were officers in the Crimea. Constantly those around me talked of the Army and the Navy and the war. Bands crashed through the streets playing "Rule, Britannia," and "The Red, White, and Blue," the *Illustrated London News* was full of battle scenes, and ships and soldiers, and all my toys were of the military kind.

How well and gratefully I remember one of my mother's bosom friends, an actress named Lucy Fisher, who brought me a box of Grenadiers and two toy cannons with peas for ammunition. I think she must have been both amiable and pretty. At any rate, I remember her as a radiant and gracious lady, whose dainty silks and sumptuous furs were delicately

scented. She would nurse me (boys hate to be nursed, but it was different with her), and she and my mother used to sing for me:

“Soldier, soldier, do not rob me,
Do not take my daughter from me:
If you do my ghost will haunt you
And my spirit will torment you;
Love, farewell! Darling, farewell!
We’re for marching; love, farewell!”

I remember—or did I dream it?—seeing some wounded soldiers landed, and amongst them a very young drummer-boy carried ashore in a blanket, and I think I must have seen a regiment marching to embark for the war, because it seems so real to me. Indeed, the impression was so deep that I described it in a story, and men who had been to the Russian War wrote and told me it was absolutely true to the facts, and asked me if I had fought in the Crimea.

If I remember correctly, peace with Russia was declared in 1856. We were then in Glasgow, my mother and I, and the rejoicings come back to me palely. Rockets sailing up into the dark, to dazzle us with sudden stars; bells ringing and guns firing. But two pictures remain clean-cut in my mind—one of a young lad in ragged trousers and a tam-o’-shanter bonnet, standing on a parapet of one of the Clyde bridges firing a pistol at the sky, then laboriously loading and firing it again, a sport which seemed to me most enviable; the other the figure of a good, kind old woman who stopped me on the stairway to our flat, told me the sausage I was carrying was not properly wrapped up, and wrapped it up for me again. And when I opened the parcel indoors and found nothing in it but a screw of paper I was surprised.

At Doncaster several actresses and Army officers came to tea and gave me cake and pennies. I was proud, but not as proud as on the glorious night

when Mother took me behind the scenes and introduced me to a real pantomime clown in his war-paint. That was a dizzying, intoxicating honour. I walked on clouds for weeks.

Six-and-thirty years later I returned to Doncaster and went to look at the house where I had played with Lucy Fisher's Grenadiers. My mother had just died. I dropped into the old theatre, and sat there very glum and lonely. They were playing *Maritana*. The place seemed dimly haunted. I left before the show was over, walked to my hotel, and tried a whisky and a cigar.

It all comes back to me through a rosy-scented dusk; as "a tale that is told."

IV

MY THEATRICAL CAREER

MY professional career—I allude to *the* profession—was brief and not financially magnificent. The highest salary to which I attained was a penny a night and a bath bun, and I retired at the early age of ten.

But do not allow these modest details to deceive you. My professional appearances were not without distinction; indeed, I may claim that on at least two occasions I scored the greatest hit in the play in which I had the honour to essay a humble rôle. (Talk about literary style! What? My word!)

I am writing of the stage in the 'fifties. There were no regular touring companies then; the actors and actresses—good ones, too—were often glad of a "six weeks certain at a guinea a week."

And when a child was wanted, one of the company who had an eligible boy or girl would oblige with the loan of the cherub.

That is how I came to appear as the child in *The Stranger*—I think it was *The Stranger*—my first engagement, one night only, after which I resigned the part.

It was like this: I was a very shy little imp, with a too-keen sense of my own personal dignity. There was a comic servant in the play who was supposed to love me. I was his master's child, and everybody loved me. The comic servant said so. I was so

sweet and gentle, so kind to dogs and the common people.

He did not inform the audience that I had refused to go on until I had eaten my bun and pouched my salary. But it was so. It was one of my professional rules, payment in advance. I ought to have been in the band.

Well, we entered. I was perched on the comic servant's shoulders. He danced and capered and said gags, and the audience laughed. I was offended. Zounds! I thought they were laughing at me, and while he was praising my amiability I lost my temper, boxed his ears, kicked, yelled, and pulled his wig off.

It was the hit of the play. The people laughed until they wept. And, as I said, I resigned the part.

A few years later, at a funny little London theatre called "the Bower," which I think must have been the model for the nautical drama in "Great Expectations" and Mr. Worple's "Hamlet," there was a somewhat similar incident.

A stage-struck young amateur used to haunt the wings in the hope of scoring as an understudy, and after many weeks of hope deferred he got his chance. A pirate slain in combat by a British tar fell too far down the stage and was shut off by a drop scene representing a fashionable interior.

The stage manager, Green, a nervous man, snatched hold of Mahomet Box, a negro dwarf, and, pushing the aspiring amateur after him, ordered the pair to carry off the slain. Mahomet took the Corsican by the shoulders while the amateur took the legs, and the corpse was borne off with his feet a yard higher than his head.

The audience laughed. The amateur was affronted. Throwing his stage hat down at old Green's feet he shouted, "Do you think I came here to be a blasted

body-snatcher?" and fled the scene. We never saw him more. Such is human pride.

The stage as I knew it was the stage as described by Dickens. Modern readers may think Vincent Crummies and his company are caricatures. No. They were drawn to the life.

The theatrical people I lived amongst as a child were just as funny, just as good-natured, just as Bohemian and impossible as their counterparts in "Nicholas Nickleby."

Remember, I am writing of the stage of more than seventy years ago; of the days before Adelphi drama, before the *Colleen Bawn*, before the Robertson comedies. There was no Henry Irving, no Pinero, nor Sims and Pettitt.

The popular drama of that time would be derided to-day as wild absurdity. The most unsophisticated provincial audience would rock with laughter over the blatant heroics, the slapdash construction, and the cheap pathos of *The Miller and his Men*, *The Black Doctor*, *The Bleeding Nun*, and *The Forest of Bondy*.

But the audience at the Bower were uncritical and had a robust taste. They demanded ghosts and pirates, smugglers and slave-drivers, Jack Tars and brigands: combats, abductions, love, treachery, battle, murder and blue fire—and they got them.

Many a time have I seen the flaxen-haired heroine, in a rustic dress of calico print tied up with pink ribbons, charged unjustly with petty larceny, tried and sentenced in thirty seconds by two ploughmen and a reedy old man in black garments and a three-cornered hat, and marched off between a file of soldiers in red coats, white trousers and firemen's helmets to be shot—condemned prisoners were always shot at the Bower.

But, young and tender though I was, I did not blench, for I knew the ropes and waited gleefully for

the gallant British tar to come to the rescue with two basket-hilted swords and the Union Jack. And I knew, too, that when the curtain fell the weepful maid, with her hair down, would skip into the wings and enjoy her share of the hot pies and cold porter sent round by her admirers in front.

The best-loved fare at the Bower and theatres of like class was the nautical drama. It was great. Always we had persecuted virtue in distress, always rescue by the wonderful and idolized Jack Tar, with heaps of fighting and piles of slain.

One Jack Tar at the Bower was equal to as many piratical swabs as the resources of the theatre could provide.

At Portsmouth I have witnessed a soul-stirring combat between one heroic seaman and sixteen smugglers. Jack always fought two-handed, but before he drew his swords he would knock down a pair of pirates with his fists, disable another with his quid, stop a fourth with his hat, and then, putting the muslin-clad damsel in distress behind him, he would get to the business of the evening.

These fights were thrilling, and often lasted longer than a whole scene in modern quick comedy, and the audience revelled in them. Remember, this was in the time of the Crimean War. There were no iron-clads, most warships were sailers, seamen were adepts with the cutlass, and boarding drill was regularly practised in the Navy.

We were nearer to Trafalgar then than we are to-day to Sebastopol. The Bower legend had traditions behind it.

But I am neglecting my own professional triumphs. There was another of them. I don't remember which theatre it was at. I think it was somewhere in the Midlands.

The play, I believe, was called *Dred, a Tale of the*

Dismal Swamp. Whether I was a slave child or the child of a master of slaves I am not sure, but some slaves had run away, and I was being saved or abducted by a comic nigger who loved me, confound him, and talked about his affection in the usual nauseating way.

We were supposed to have travelled a great distance. Bloodhounds were on our track. We reached the dismal swamp. That is to say, having collected my penny and eaten my bun I was trotted on to the stage, the nigger holding me by the hand, and, according to instructions received, I sank upon a rock, exhausted.

So far so good. The black knelt beside me in great distress, and, producing a large black bottle, handed it to me, begging me to take a sip of rum.

Now my bun had been heavily sugared, and I was thirsty. I knew the bottle did not contain rum, but I did not know it was empty, and I tried to drink.

While the good nigger confided his troubles to the audience, I put the bottle to my lips. Nothing came. I tilted it higher. Nothing doing. I tilted it still higher, and when, startled by the rising gale of hilarity, the black looked round, I had the rum bottle inverted and was doing my best.

The sequel is lost in the mists of the years.

Perhaps I resigned the engagement. I dare say; it's a thankless world, and the conventions of the stage left no scope for originality. At any rate my custom of demanding salary in advance appears to have been based on sound principles.

In those days the profession was financially precarious. Often the ghost walked with a limp; sometimes he did not walk at all. On occasions the management walked and left the company stranded. I have known it done.

There was an old tragedian, my mother told me,

called "Collar-the-Heap King." It was related that one day at "Treasury" (what a euphemism) the manager had only sixteen shillings to divide. King went in first, and the manager, in a crying voice, explained: "Very sorry, Mr. King. Business awful. I regret that this is all I have for the company. Perhaps next week."

King spoke in his deep tragedy voice: "Sorry? So am I. Wife and seven children; all of them starving. By the Lord, sir, collar the heap!" And reaching out a long arm he ramped the treasury.

That was regarded as a funny story, but, as a child, I did not see the humour. Too much familiarity with short commons does not breed contempt; it breeds fear and dull anxiety. "Wife and seven children, all of them starving" was too painfully true to my young experience for me to find poor King's exploit at all amusing.

Here is another story told by my mother to a friend. There was a very pretty actress at the Bower whom I will call Lilian. I liked her very much, as did all children. But she dressed too well, and some of the ladies of the company did not approve of her. They did not regard her as respectable, and she left the theatre.

Soon afterwards the stage manager, a crusty, testy, sarcastic old man—I will call him Harkness—fell ill. When he had been away from the theatre for a week or two the company got up a subscription and sent the heavy lead round to his lodgings. The amount, I believe, was two and fourpence; we did not live on velvet at the Bower, and Mr. Sheppard was rather unhappy and nervous about his mission.

But when he got to the old man's lodgings, expecting a painful scene of poverty and illness, he found Harkness in the first floor front before a rousing fire, with wine and fruit on the table and a real cigar

between his lips, while seated at the piano playing Mozart was the discarded Lilian. She had nursed the old man, had fed him, cheered him, and pulled him through.

And I am very sorry to say that Lilian died a few years later, on the Continent, in bitter poverty. "Thus fareth many and many a one."

The old Portsmouth Theatre was very like the Bower, larger and rather better class, but just as funny, and the audience, which was largely composed of sailors and soldiers, knew what it wanted and saw that it got it.

It is told, but maybe it is a legend, that one night in the middle of the opera of *Maritana* a sailor called for "Rule, Britannia," and when the music went on heedless of his demands he arose and declared that unless "Rule, Britannia" were immediately performed he would "board the stage and thrash the fiddlers."

His challenge was supported by loud cheers from the naval and military in the pit and gallery, and "Rule, Britannia" was played and sung. I can believe it.

One night there was a "military bespeak," and the house was full of officers and men of the garrison. The play was *The French Spy*, with Madame Celeste in a leading part.

Being a military piece, the officers of the Royal Marines had allowed two half companies of their regiment to act as soldiers and Arabs. One of the acts closed with a battle in which the Marines dressed as French Zouaves defeated the Marines dressed as Arabs.

At least, that is what should have happened, but a mistake had been made. B Company had found the Zouaves and A Company the Arabs. When the combat was joined the Arabs made a stubborn stand. All might have gone well, though, had not a soldier

in the pit cried out in his excitement: "Go it, A Company!" That, as the Americans say, "tore it."

Was A to lie down to B? Not on their lives. In vain the stage manager hissed from the wing, "Lie down, Arabs, lie down." The fight began to look serious. Shouts rose from all parts of the house and the act-drop was put down hastily upon a real old *mêlée*.

Enough of these "small beer chronicles." I hope I have not fatigued my readers as badly as myself, for the fact is I am tired of writing about myself. Still, I like to think of old times and old friends, and I have been impressed during these erratic recollections by the important part which friendship plays in life.

There is a great deal of love and kindness in the world. I would say with Abu L'Ala:

I look on men as I would look on trees
That may be writing in the purple dome
Romantic lines of black, and are at home
Where lie the little garden hostelries.

Let us think gratefully and pleasantly of those we have known and of comfortable hours in those "little garden hostelries."

SOME AMIABLES

ONE of Thackeray's stories is entitled: "The Adventures of Philip on his way through the World; showing who robbed him, who helped him, and who passed him by." Now, a novel and a book of reminiscences are not of the same class. If I write of men and women I have known, I write of real people, some of whom, happily, are still with us; therefore, as a matter of honour and right feeling I shall be silent as to those who "robbed" me and those who "passed me by."

I would not bear my enemies, if any, on my back, nor nurse my wrath by the domestic hearth. If a fellow-sinner injures me, I forgive. Indeed, it would entail an effort of memory on my part to recall a slight or grievance.

It is pleasanter and more wholesome to dwell on old gifts and kindnesses. The Good Samaritan is more grateful company than those who passed by on the other side. Let us rejoice in the roses as they blow and forget the weeds we have plucked out. In writing the adventures of Robert on his way through the world I had much rather show those who loved him, those who helped him, and those who made him smile.

Nor in these desultory papers will the reader find spycandals, or biting sarcasms, or any ridicule or mockery of those whose salt I have eaten, whose

hands I have grasped; who with me "have watched the loitering stars at play." The author of "Philip," in an essay on back-biting, said we all enjoy "a slice of cold friend with currant jelly." I shall deny myself the felicity of inviting you to join me in the discussion of any such highly seasoned course.

Nay, I could not even dish up a savoury of the indiscretions of famous people, for I have met but few, never having sought the company of the great, so that gossips will look in vain for the truth about Lord Kitchener, or Lord Northcliffe, or the author of the latest successful play. I do not know the truth about those illustrious British subjects, and would not tell it if I did. But if I knew the truth about the exorbitant tax on tobacco I would write so that he who runs might read.

The fact is, I am by nature a domestic animal of quiet social habits, and I have forgathered mainly with fellow-wayfarers of my own style and humour, as we trudged along the highway of life. And it has been my wont and custom to seek in those I have met for qualities of a kindly, amusing, or congenial sort, rather than to pry for faults, or make sour sport of little vanities or quirks of character. Hence, in these rambling sketches you will meet, dear reader, few women and men and children who are not "nice to know."

When I was a child of seven, I found one Harry Oxbury, an officer of the merchant service, very nice to know. There was no grown-up nonsense about Harry. When a boy visited his bedroom of a morning Harry understood at a glance that one was a lion, or a pirate, or a Red Indian, and immediately took measures for his own defence.

Or he would acknowledge the suggestion that he was a horse, or an elephant, or that his bed was a boat, and would behave with discretion and energy

in that station of life to which it had pleased a boy to call him.

He had a talent, too, for the commissariat, so that a boy whose system needed comforting with apples was not sent empty away. In short, he was all that the men of the Ramchunders looked for in a "sailor," by which term they implied a friend, companionable and jolly; one who could play games or tell tales; one whose largess was spontaneous and free.

There stood, within a hop, skip and jump of our front door, a delectable small shop, kept by a fairy godmother named Mrs. Arthur, a little old lady with rosy cheeks, white ringlets, and large horn spectacles. That shop was below the pavement, so that to enter it one descended three steps.

Within was stored rich treasure of fruits and sweetmeats—yes, and ginger-beer. The luscious scents emanating from Mrs. Arthur's open door bewitched a boy's nose as the songs of the Sirens bewitched the ears of the Grecian mariners. Methinks I smell them now. Indeed, I never read "Goblin Market" without remembering Mrs. Arthur's:

Morning and evening, maids heard the goblins cry:
Come buy our orchard fruits, come buy, come buy.
Apples and quinces, lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries, melons and raspberries.

And all the delicious rest of it. But the goblins had no acid drops, no jujubes, no liquorice root, no ginger-beer, no peppermints, no sherbet. Mrs. Arthur had them all. A magic shop! And when one went there with one's sailor! Oh, excellent young man! Pennies often, and betimes silver! Harry was nice to know.

Another of my heroes was Eugene Corri, uncle of the well-known boxing referee. Eugene, who was

my mother's cousin, came to see us once in Portsmouth, when I was nine. He took me on his knee and said: "Now then, Bobby, while I talk to your mother you feel in my waistcoat pockets for treasure: money, you know."

What a lordly thing to say! What knowledge of a boy's heart it proved! I regarded Eugene Corri as the first gentleman in Europe. I found two shillings and sevenpence, and he let me keep it all. But Mother had the last word. Yes, those were lean and sterile times, and a boy who captured a penny remembered it in his prayers.

Six years later, while I was acquiring the art and mystery of dressing hog's bristles, I worked at the same bench with a funny old thing named Preston: otherwise Old Bill. He was testy and sarcastic and a hard-roed pessimist. "Ah," he would say when we boys and girls romanced of the future, or "gave guesses," as Browning has it. "Ah!" Old Bill would croak: "we're born, but we aren't buried." A portentous sentiment, meant to cool our young blood and steady us with omens.

He was not popular, Old Bill; too prickly. But he was good to me, and I liked him. He helped me with my work, and always spoke to me kindly. He talked to me of music, I remember. He loved music, and, so some of the men told me, would follow a band for miles and be as proud as a Mandarin of three tails if allowed to help the big drummer carry the big drum.

When I was about eighteen the old chap fell ill and took to his bed. I used to visit him. He liked to hear me talk, and we had some ideas in common, one of which was our mutual regard for a little girl at the works. We used to speak of her and of music and of books I had read.

But he got worse and worse, and one night while

I sat with him he grew delirious and raved about sin and the wrath of God; and every few minutes would whisper: "Look, lad! Doest ee 'ear t' glasses clinkin'?' Eh, but I've been a bad 'un." Later he calmed down and asked me to turn him over. I lifted him, turned him over, and said good night. But he made no answer. He was dead.

Some of our more elderly readers will remember the grim and stern theological dogmas of the 'sixties. The day after Bill Preston died I called at his home and found a minister there. The widow was crying, and she asked the minister if there was any hope for her poor man. And the minister, a prim young fellow, with a cold eye, answered: "I am afraid I can give you no hope, Mrs. Preston. Your husband was a great sinner, and I fear he did not make his peace with God."

When the foolish fellow had gone I gave Mrs. Preston some of my opinions on the subject of sin, and forgiveness of sin, and assured her that, except for an occasional lapse from the strict rule of temperance, her old husband had been a good man, kind and generous, and had gone to his account with a cleaner heart than many more respectable and ostentatious Christians. But the callow minister had booked the sinner for hell, and had coolly conveyed his opinion to the sorrowing wife and daughters.

Yes. Religious folk were strict even to severity in those days. But the world is wide, and we are not all cast in the same mould. Only a couple of years later I found myself in the Ramchunders talking to the Perpendicular Recruit. I wonder what the prim young minister would have thought of him.

What would he have thought could he have "listened in" to the sounds in my barrack room, the nocturnal music of the sleeping Ramchunders: Tiger Lyons grinding his teeth, Chancy Sullivan whistling

waltzes softly in his dreams, Father Peter snoring like a bassoon, and the weird prayer, repeated *da capo* in a horrible rasping whisper by Gentleman Hanson: "God — strike — me — dead; God — strike — me — bloody dead." What would he have made of Tommy Hogan's lurid love stories, or the repartee of Theophilus Candy and Corporal Blood-an-oun's? How would he have fared at the hands of the wild cat Alice Berry, and could he have returned soft answers to the vituperative scorn of Red Loo Page of "The Valiant Soldier"? I think that painfully good young man lived in a narrow world where was no room for a sense of humour. An hour's pack drill under Blastation Bonass would have been a liberal education to him, more improving perhaps than the warm humanity of Private E. T. Parker, or Mrs. Agatha Cook of Barnes. Let us hear the fusilier and the lady.

It is within a few minutes of Retreat when in answer to a shout: "Corporal of the Guard," the young lance-corporal steps forth into the sally-port at Bembridge and asks sharply: "What's this?"

Burly Tim Doyle, sentry on Number One post, confronts Private E. T. Parker, who is dripping wet, flushed, dishevelled and minus a cap. "Sure, Corporal," Tim answers, "I could not let him cross the P'rade in that pickle an' it near sundown."

"Right, sentry."

"Now, Parker, what the dickens have you been up to?"

E. T. Parker, a grizzled veteran, answers, with a twinkle in his eye: "Well may you ask, Corporal, and promptly will I explain. I am just now returned from saving that beer-barrel of a fusilier, Bob Sunderland, from sudden death; death violent and gory. And the graceless soldier has taken cover in the Angler's Inn and swears he'll see me fried on the

earl of Hell's gridiron before he'll march until he's diluted the water inside him with a pint of the best Scotch. But let me my tale unfold. Would you believe it, Corporal, that unregenerate Briton, farmer Meagre, has turned a devilish ungentle bull loose in the meadow where I go to catch his roach. I give you my word, Corporal, I despair of the human race. We are born in sin and there is none righteous amongst us. Were it not for a certain aplomb, or as some might call it, presence of mind, which I have acquired in the service of the Queen, God bless her, Private Robert Leith Sunderland of F Company would now be stretched upon the trampled sward, waiting to have his inquest. I tell you, Corporal, I'll see that bucolic mangel merchant hanged or ere I set foot in his field again. Crush me, yes."

"Chased you, did he?" the corporal asks.

"Chased? The furious animal, incensed by the scarlet which is our country's pride, came barging athwart the meadow, treading down the innocent cowslips and blowing like a whale. As I do live by bread, Corporal, scarce had I settled on the mossy bank when I was disturbed by the thunder of his oncoming charge. We were at the wider and deeper end of Pender's brook, where we could not cross. We had a hundred paces start and some thrice that distance to run. Private Sunderland, a good soldier, though a slave to the cursed drink, was my problem. He is built, as you know, Corporal, rather for attack than for retreat. He made bad weather of it, and the ravening beast gained so quickly that ere we reached the shallows we had to take the water. With that aplomb—I think I mentioned the aplomb—which adds a martial grace to courage, I bunked Private Robert Leith Sunderland's fifteen stone into the burbling stream and leapt behind him at the very moment when the murderous monster hurtled

past like the charge of heavy cavalry at Balaclava. Deeds like these, Corporal, atone in some measure for the taint of original sin which we share in common as the result of Adam's incomprehensible partiality for raw fruit. I scorn to boast; but if, Corporal, you could accommodate me with the loan of a splendid shilling till pay-day? A thousand thanks. May flights of Thingammies sing you to your what's-his-name. There is a bright promise in your eye, Corporal, which bids me hope to see you rise to the rank of major-general. In that glad hour, Corporal, you will look back without regret to the assistance you have now rendered an impoverished but not wholly undeserving fusilier."

"I thought," the corporal hints, "that you mentioned pay-day."

"Corporal, I did. God bless you for reminding me, I did. But—listen. That raucous bellowing is *not* farmer Meagre's black-browed slayer climbing the down in search of a red revenge. No. That is Private Robert Leith Sunderland making his way to barracks under the baneful influence of liquor. You might think, Corporal, that the mouth of the pit had gaped and we were hearing the agonized shrieks and strangled imprecations of the damned. But no, Corporal, that is stout Bob Sunderland gilding the way with song."

Private E. T. Parker, after blessing every living creature except farmer Meagre and his black and bovine familiar, steps through the gate just as Private R. L. Sunderland comes dancing on to the draw-bridge. The sun is setting and the bugles are ringing out the bold notes of the Retreat.

Mrs. Agatha Cook of Barnes was a neighbour of ours, a fragment of whose gay prattle I once took down as she talked to my wife through the holly-hocks:

"My dear, what I suffered with those boots! Hurt me! Oh! hurt my feelings. I have their footprints on my heart. Tight? No! Squeaked, my dear. But that's too tame a word; they squealed, they chirped, they whistled. As I told the man at the boot shop, I wanted a pair of boots, not a musical box. Say, the idiot? Said some do creak. But I said mine played tunes, and asked him if a lady could go to church behind a drum and fife band.

"Then he said he'd cure them, and I left them. I said: 'You make them dry up, will you? Put them to sleep, tell them to lie down. I don't want people to think I've got a brood of young chickens under my skirts.' Eh! Oh, yes. He made them dumb. Packed the soles with dubbin.

"And when my husband and I came home late from a long walk and went to bed, my dear, I had feet like a Pondo chief. Black, my dear: black as Tophet and greasy as the axle of a cart. Dubbin he called it. And all the servants gone to bed and only cold water in the bath. What a predicament!

"Isn't it just like a British workman?"

"As I told the man, I said: 'If you had a brick wall round you and a clock in your hat you'd be a complete idiot asylum.' Yes, but, my dear, I had to sleep with my feet rolled up in my flannel—who's that at the window?"

And I wonder what the young he-saint would have thought of Mrs. Agatha Cook.

VI

EMILY

HALIFAX has been described as the ugliest town in England. That is unkind and, like many unkind sayings, untrue, though I will admit that Halifax, as Henry James would say, "is of a homeliness." Yet this homely town, with its bleak winds and its hundred reeking chimney shafts, was my Arcadia, the place where "youth's sweet-scented manuscript" unrolled.

My first brief sojourn there was during my eighth year and, as I spent most of it in the hands of the doctor, was almost barren of incident; but it did yield one fragrant episode.

At the old Bell School I met a lady of some ten summers, whose name, I believe, was Emily, with whom I formed what novelists call "a relation." I cannot, I regret to say, recall the incidents of that brief courtship. I do not remember how it began; but, as I was very shy, I imagine Emily threw the first flower.

Be that as it may, one green afternoon the pretty child—if the darling is still alive she is probably a sweet old grandma—handed me a *billet-doux*, couched in melting verse, as follows:

The rose is red; the violet's blue;
The pink is sweet and so are you
And so is she who sends you this
And when we meet we'll have a kiss.

Emily, my matured wisdom hints to me, was a frank lover who did not let the grass grow under her dainty feet.

I was on my mettle; could I answer in bald prose? No. But like Hamlet, I had not the art to number my groans. Finding, however, in the cottage where we lodged, a stained and mutilated copy of Shelley's poems, I borrowed a stanza from a *Bridal Song* which I copied in my best round hand and coyly passed to my lady at our next meeting.

Alas! I was betrayed. The Shelleyan stanza, which in my innocent ear cooed as pleasantly and inoffensively as the voice of the turtle when heard in our land, gave umbrage to the parents of the fair Emily, who decided that I was not nice to know and forbade the continuance of our sweet communion. I was desolated. Emily cut me dead. What was left me but to bow to fate? The gloomy days dragged on. Oh, Emily!

Perplexed and discomforted by this "damned defeat," I never thought of blaming Shelley. But many years later, after my bruised heart had been mended and let to a more appreciative tenant, chancing upon the fatal *Bridal Song* its true inwardness stood revealed. To me, as a child, the lines had seemed, as all poetry had then seemed, just a sugared and agreeable jingle, whereas at twenty-five I was amused to find them strikingly otherwise. A most foul mischance. And if Emily to-day is a dear old grandma I wonder whether she has forgotten the horrid little urchin who wooed her with erotic song. The irony of it.

It was at this time that the doctors told my mother she could never hope to rear me. I should not, they said, ever reach the age of ten. A bad guess. They had not reckoned with my innate obstinacy and *joie de vivre*.

VII

THE YOUNG IDEA

GENTLE reader, if you will "come over here where the Lord Chancellor cannot hear us," I will tell you how and why I became a Socialist. No, please don't guess; you will guess wrongly.

To begin at the beginning, my mother was a very original woman. She was generous and compassionate; she loved animals and children, and her scorn for snobs and bullies was bitter and almost out of measure. She was hot-tempered, too, and had a stabbing tongue.

And in those things I was her son. But that is not all. I was a delicate and impressionable child, so frail that doctor after doctor told my mother she could not hope to rear me. And my mother was an actress, and those were cold years in the profession, so that we were very poor.

Poverty, hardship, and sickness burnt deep into my impressionable nature and left sharp records on my retentive memory. I was sorry for myself, and because of that sorrow I was imbued with a pitiful sympathy with all who were unhappy or unsuccessful.

Then, still a child, I went for a year to church and heard the Litany. The Litany to me was a living and real thing—not a mere formula or exercise. I took it very seriously. I knew it by heart. I believed it. I believe it still and love it, heretic as I am.

THE YOUNG IDEA

In the Litany the congregation prayed for fatherless children and for widows. My mother was a widow, I a fatherless child. They prayed for sick persons and young children; I was a young child, and a sick one only too often. And then the Litany bade us all, including orphans and frail children, to comfort and help the weak-hearted and to raise up them that fall. And I took the injunction to heart and remembered it.

As a mere child, also, I read Dickens, and was inoculated with his democratic sentiment and passionate sympathy with the humble and the poor. And there followed a boyhood spent amongst working people, a boyhood of unstable health, of unsatisfied desires, of eager striving for some small measure of self-culture.

And at twenty I went into the Army and learned the value of collective action and the religion of *esprit de corps*, and I learnt to stand upright and to keep myself and my belongings scrupulously clean. And when I left the Army I saw children barefooted in London streets, and I saw half-nude women carrying salt blocks in the Cheshire works, and finally, I made a thorough tour of the Manchester slums.

Having explained what my mother was like and what her child was like, it will not be difficult to understand that as a grown-up man, with a wife and children of my own, the thought of a hungry or unhappy child or ill-used woman infuriated me. I saw and felt what was going on all around me, and I searched and prayed for a remedy. And while I was searching someone sent me a pamphlet on Socialism and I jumped at it. It answered my questions. It was what I sought. It meant human brotherhood and co-operation. It meant the collective action of the Army. It meant *esprit de corps*, a larger, deeper, nobler *esprit de corps*.

I snatched Socialism to my bosom. I went out into the highways and the by-ways and raved about it. I became notorious. I was no longer respectable. One of my friends told another of my friends that I was an ensanguined crackpot. Ah, well. I am older now, and wiser—perhaps. But it was a great adventure. After all, I was only acting up to the precepts of the Litany, and I don't regret it.

To return to my childhood. I hope I have not conveyed the impression that I was a good little boy, for that would not be consonant with the facts. No; I was as simian as any other young monkey and got into my fair proportion of scrapes, and in those days if a boy danced he paid the piper. My mother was a strict disciplinarian, and the most energetic and zealous officer in the schools at that time was Corporal Punishment. I do not mean to say hard things in the course of these fragmentary recollections. But I am unable to speak of some of the *soi-disant* schoolmasters of my childhood with gratitude or respect.

I went for a few weeks to a school in Portsmouth, the master of which must have modelled himself on Creakle. He was a rough-faced, loud-voiced, stocky fellow, with a mop of grey hair, and I believe he had adopted the profession from sheer joy in the use of the cane.

There were no School Boards then and, as far as I know, there was no kind of inspection. Anyone could open a school, and any schoolmaster could thrash the scholars. Creakle used to close the doors on the stroke of nine, and all who came late were promptly horsed and caned. If a little wretch spoke, or dropped his pencil, or failed to answer a question, he was called out, horsed, and caned. We did not love Creakle. He was, I think, the most savage martinet of all.

Now little boys do not enjoy a thrashing. They

fear it and they resent it. They very often do not know what it is for, and it hurts.

And yet I remember one assistant master, very much given to the use of the cane, who was not unpopular with us, his scholars. His name, his real name, was John Silly. He was a little man, about twenty years of age, with a face like a monkey. His disciplinary method was uncertain. Sometimes he would be formal and would call a culprit out and administer two welts with the cane. Other times, if a boy in the back desk offended, John Silly would jump on to the front desk and charge through the class, laying about him right and left on the way like a hussar at "pursuing practice." This was painful, for we were mostly thin, and got hard knocks on our bony backs and shoulders, but it had in it a spice of sporting excitement.

And the fact is that we liked the little beast. We relished his witty abuse (he had a scalding tongue) and we realized that he charged and slashed without malice. If he is alive now, he will be over eighty. I should like to "sit him down and fill his can." I should really enjoy a smoke and chat with him. He was an amusing little ruffian.

I may remark, in passing, that they did not teach us much in those schools. I don't think they knew much, and they were too greatly preoccupied with the cane.

Of the head master I will say little. He was a hairy, red-bearded savage and confined his activities to the ceremonial floggings, at which the girls as well as the boys were present. If he met any of his victims when they were grown up, I fancy he would have reason to believe that "Life is real, life is earnest." He never touched me, but I have not forgiven him for what I saw him do.

His successor was the one schoolmaster we re-

spected. He never used a cane. He could keep order without one. The cane wallahs never did get order. But Mr. Windsor (that was his name) would step quietly into the school, where the buzz and chatter were worthy of the parrot-house in the Zoo, and would say in a clear but gentle voice: "Noise!" Then he would pause while the clatter subsided. Then in a louder voice he would say: "Great noise!" And as the hush fell like a holy calm upon the crowd of assorted imps he would conclude in a voice deep and full of omens: "Very great noise!" That was my first lesson in discipline. It stood me in good stead in the Army.

I was fortunate in the matter of punishment. I took pot luck with the other monkeys in the dashing cavalry charges of John Silly, but I escaped the chief bullies. I did, however, at the tender age of six, have a "sperience" at the hands of Mrs. Joe Gargery.

Mrs. Gargery, for by that name I still think of her, was the strong-minded, strong-handed, impudent, witty, jolly wife of a Gravesend cab-driver. My brother and I were left in her care; my mother having departed for a brief theatrical tour. "Leave 'em to me," said Mrs. Gargery, "I'll treat 'em like my own." And she did. There were five of us, ranging from six years to ten, and we all slept in one room. One evening Mrs. Gargery was out, and her maid, a girl, perhaps fourteen, came to see that all was well. And it was, if she had left it at that. But the child was vain of her long hair, which reached the floor when she leaned back, and she let her hair down and began to dance in the light of the candle. Well—in the middle of it—enter Madame Gargery.

It was what modern reporters call "a tense moment." Madame ordered the budding Pavlova to bed. She then took off her slipper and addressed her first-born with grim geniality: "Arry, come 'ere to me." Harry

rose and sought his good, kind mother's knee. Shall I draw a veil? It was more than she did. On the contrary! As for us, we followed the politic course in such an emergency: we howled like bull calves.

When the séance was over we hardly knew whether to laugh or cry, but the squeals of Pavlova from the room above, where she was "going through it," enabled us to compromise on a rather tremulous snigger. A fine woman, a fine woman. Alas! the sad feature of these tender memories is the knowledge that the chief actors have passed away. Mrs. Gargery must long since have been gathered to her fathers. The thought grieves me. I should like to drop in at the old cottage and take tea with her. Why not? She once took tea with me.

Florence, too. At the age of ten, being deep in a romance called "The Scottish Cavaliers," I was seized of the notion to pay my addresses to some lady as a gallant should. Florence Bush was a swarthy child of my age who lived next door. I washed my face, and probably my neck (I say probably), went out on to "the leads" where Florence sat at her window—I mean casement—and addressed her in the picked phrase of romance. I said, "Hullo, Florrie," and smiled.

Florence looked at me with narrowed eyes and whispered softly: "Pig! Pig! Pig!" I concluded that my suit was rejected. I went in and scoffed two green apples, the property of the first-floor boarder, and forswore the wiles of the fickle sex. The heartless jade! I wonder what she is doing now.

But a truce to tender trifling. At the age of ten I had begun to read, and my first book was "The Pilgrim's Progress." I revelled in it.

In the house where we lodged at that time there was a baby, and because its mother was clever and I was young and willing, I often acted as dry nurse in the

mother's absence. Hour after hour I would sit by the little stranger's cradle rocking it as I read my wonderful first book.

Moreover, growing fond of the helpless, inarticulate little bundle of pink pulpiness, as I should in a short time have come to love a dog, or a doll, or a broken knife, I would at times, when the mite was restless, ride it upon my knee and recite to it passages out of Bunyan.

"The Pilgrim's Progress" was reality to me. Armed with two feet of broken sword-blade and wearing a paper helmet, I went forth as Greatheart and wrought deeds of valour and puissance upon a retired performing poodle from Astley's Circus, who was good enough to double the part of Giant Grim and the two lions.

The baby, also, unconscious atom, played many parts. Now it was Christian and had to be defended against the poodle at the point of the sword; now it was Faithful being tried for his life; and anon it was Prudence, buckling on my harness before I sallied out to vanquish Carlo (as Apollyon) in the Valley of Humiliation. If that baby did not dream dreams it must have had "no more conceit in it than a mallet."

As for me, I was existing in a kind of Thespian paradise. The stairway to the bedroom was the Hill Difficulty, the dark lobby was the Valley of the Shadow, and I often swam in great fear and peril, and with profusion of splutterings, across the black River of Death which lay between kitchen and scullery.

Youngsters are like that; they live in a land of make-believe. But when we are grown up, and turning grey? I wonder.

VIII

HALIFAX

IT must have been in May 1862 when my mother set out with her two boys to walk the eight long miles between Bradford and Halifax. On Wibsey Slack, an unlovely desert of grey shale, she paused to ask guidance from a gnarled and grizzled mender of roads. "Why, lass," he said, "that's a long trail for a little one like thee;" after which he directed her and with a few kind words offered her sixpence. Mother took the coin with thanks, for she could not find it in her heart to refuse. I never had a chance to repay the gentle road-mender; but I have repaid him many times by proxy. And so, tired and very hungry, we came into the smoky haven of our choice.

There ensued some years of weary work and short commons. We were very poor; Mother was resolved to leave the stage and get us boys into some regular employment. She got work as a dressmaker with emoluments of eight shillings a week, I went to help at lithographic printing at a salary of eighteenpence, and my brother started as a law stationer's errand boy with a stipend of two shillings. Our gross income was eleven shillings and sixpence a week and we paid five shillings for lodgings. These figures are so eloquent that I will spare the reader all unpleasant details. It is obvious that we had fallen upon barren years.

We took Fortune's buffets in our stride, as it were,

having had previous experience. It was not our way to mope. Mother was an old campaigner and a cheerful soul and we were boys. For my part, I lived in the pleasant land of make-believe. While I stood stolid and silent, to damp the stone, a process fertile in chilblains, I wrote novels more successful than "David Copperfield," conducted campaigns which would have caused Napoleon to burn his baton with envy, and visited such wild and wonderful regions of the earth as Peter Wilkins never dreamed of.

There were some books, too, from the penny library: "Robinson Crusoe," "The Life of Nelson," "The Old Curiosity Shop," "British Battles by Land and Sea," and the novels of Captain Marryat, the Brontës and Miss Braddon. And occasionally there was Yorkshire hospitality, which took the agreeable form of spice cake and cheese, oven-cakes, oranges and coffee. And there were Christmas carols and Marionette shows and the Halifax fair. I delighted in the fair. It was life. And it lasted a whole week.

If I had to visit a fair ground now, with its heat, its dust, its jostling crowd, its strident din, and clamant odours, I should want a gas-mask. But a boy of twelve can idealize the most unlovely scenery and the most vulgar figures. His unspoiled imagination bestows form and colour on the sorriest of shows. His young eyes find stars in every puddle. His young heart warms to the meanest tale. Like the spider on its gossamer filament, he sails with dreams. Green apples are his pomegranates. He has not lost his fairies.

We were tolerably happy and things mended slowly. When I was thirteen I went to work at the brush-shop, where I got three shillings a week to begin with and soon advanced to three and sixpence. An extra sixpence was a circumstance in those days.

HALIFAX

Here I was apprenticed to learn "the art and mystery of brush-making." My mother wished it, and I was secretly resolved that as soon as I was big enough I would take French leave and try my luck in pastures new. And we are now arrived at the third period.

IX

SALLY

THIS second part of the third Halifax period begins with the most momentous day of my long life, and I feel that the background and atmosphere are colourless and banal. There is nothing romantic or picturesque about a brush-shop. It was a murky, untidy, barn-like place, smelling strongly of hot pitch.

Early in the year 1867—strange that I have forgotten the date—one of our workers, Miss Lizzie Brearly, brought a new girl. The new girl was small and fair and her name was Sarah. She struck me as pretty and refined, but I should have been very much astonished, and so would she, had the buxom jolly Lizzie said to me: “Robert, allow me to introduce Miss Crossley, your future wife.”

Men do, of course, and often in the most casual way, meet their future wives without prevision of their destiny. Cases of love at first sight occur; but I have never known one. I certainly did not fall in love at first sight. Indeed, I did not much like the new girl, or thought I did not like her. Yet within a few weeks I said for myself what Miss Brearly had not said: I told myself I would marry Sarah Crossley.

Audacious? Yes, I was a poor lad of sixteen, with no prospects. She was a bright attractive girl; a general favourite. The odds were heavily against me. Girls have not to make a house nor a position.

But I never wavered in my faith. I was naturally patient and resolute: a stayer. I think, too, that when a man loves a woman, though he make no sign or signal, there will gradually develop a kind of telepathic communion, so that she will be influenced subconsciously. The words telepathic and subconscious were not in vogue in 1867; but I had an undefined feeling that I could "will" the little lady to wait for me; as I believe I did. This was not self-assurance. Swinburne was right: "Love's worth love."

Anatole France says the poets teach us how to love. I have read reams of poetry and have found but a few shy verses inspired by true vision. Nearly all our love poems breathe passion and glorify beauty. They bid a lover be bold, be persistent, be humble, be fulsome; as though a woman were a doe to be hunted or a trout to be played. These are the prescriptions of erotic quacks. The true medium of love is sympathy. I can remember only one poet who tells us that the surest way to win a woman's love is to love her.

Nor are the poets safe guides as to what we should love. The great noisy rout acclaim youth and beauty. Shall I say a saucy thing? I don't believe any man ever loved a woman for her beauty. Beauty has enmeshed millions in the toils of desire. Love is attracted by the lovable. Sir John Hawkins wrote of his Sweet Sweeting: "She is so proper and pure, full steadfast, stable and demure," and Thomas Carew is still more explicit and his pretty poem will help me to make my meaning clear:

He that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
Fuel to maintain his fires;
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

MY EIGHTY YEARS

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
Kindle never dying fires;
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.

Gentle thoughts and calm desires. That is a perfect line: the real right thing. Love is no midsummer madness. It is the sanest sanity, the soundest wisdom. Romeo did not love Juliet. He did not know her. He was "in love" with her: a very different matter. Now, Sidney Carton loved Lucy Manette and Jacob loved Rachel, or he would not have served seven years for her. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned."

My love was not of the heroic type, such as novelists delight in. It did not burn with the passion of flaming youth. It was a practical and patient love; a thing logical and permanent, a kind of happy perfected liking, deep and still. Dr. Watts was not an inspired poet, but he said well: "'Tis friendship makes the bondage sweet." Unpropitious as my prospect seemed in 1867, I believe that, as the Orientals say: "It was written." It seems as though my wife and I were born married.

My future wife's most special physical characteristic was fineness. She was little and slim, with tiny hands and feet, a small, shapely head, an oval face, with a good brow and delicate mouth and nose. She had soft flaxen hair, like a doll, and the quick dark eyes of a robin.

She walked with a brisk light step, spoke nicely, in a clear pleasant treble, and had a ready joyous laugh like the trill of a bird. At first the pretty, rather petulant set of her lips and the carriage of her head

gave an impression of pride, but it was due solely to her fresh vitality: she was very happily alive. She wore a plain black dress which stressed her fairness and had small gold drop-rings in her ears. A pretty little lady, dainty as a Dresden china figure; an unusual, noticeable girl. In age she was a young fifteen.

We soon became good friends, and that was all I played for, being of prudent mind. Perhaps she guessed I was fond of her; girls are gifted in that way; but I was not her only admirer. Indeed, some three years later she left our works and was soon afterwards engaged to that *bête noire* of the story-teller: "Another." That did not daunt me. I did not believe she would marry "another." How would she when she was fated to marry me?

All this, some of my readers may think, is the flattest of small beer chronicles. Others who have been blessed with a happy married life will understand. I will make my excuse with the poet's pigeon: "the account of my journey will give you the greatest pleasure. I shall say: 'I was there, such and such incidents befell me! You will believe that it all happened to yourself.'"

For the rest, the third period was a time of study. I practised arithmetic, tried hard and not at all successfully to improve my hand of write and read all the books I could come by. As I went to work at six I used to breakfast at the workshop and I had a penny a day for tea and coffee; that penny I saved to buy books and did without the tea. The winters were very cold and often for weeks together the roads and paths would be coated with ice, and the going on dark mornings in those hilly streets was precarious. However, there were concerts and parties and in the summer flower shows at which there were bands and dancing and roses, and nice girls: Elysian fields. But never had I

MY EIGHTY YEARS

such joy of Pye Nest flower show as the year I could not go there, for amongst the crowd returning I met the future Mrs. Robert Blatchford, looking sweetly pretty, in a heliotrope frock (her favourite colour) and a white Leghorn hat. I can see her now as plainly as I can see some lovely portrait painted by a master, though it was nearly sixty years ago. And I saw her no more for two long years, for in the following spring I set out to seek my fortune.

X

ROMANCE

THE third Halifax period may be roughly bisected into two parts: boyhood and adolescence. The first covered three years, from thirteen to sixteen, the second four years, from sixteen to twenty. The sordid dullness of the first part was relieved and illuminated by the vivid play of imagination. Though I worked, with much disrelish, in the brush-shop, I really lived in the Never-Never Land.

In a narrow street, with the unromantic name of Swine Market, there were two intriguing shops. One was a fruit-shop, kept by an old gentleman known to us boys as Dicky Dunn; the other was a gunshop.

Dicky Dunn sold delectable cordials, ruby and amethyst and gold, in tiny tumblers, at a halfpenny per rapture.

The gun-shop was for wonder and desire. One does not get much warlike ironmongery for twopence-halfpenny-farthing. But a boy could dream. That was cheap. In the window there were fowling-pieces, single and double, with smoke-brown barrels and stocks inlaid with pearl and silver; formidable revolvers of the old pepper-box type and—rifles.

How I coveted those rifles. And little did I foresee that in a dozen years the Martini would, in my expert hands, become for me a source of profit and repute.

To this day I love a rifle. It is a sheer delight to cuddle my cheek down against the butt, to glance with a sophisticated eye along the sights and test the trigger-pull with cunning finger.

A lady once upbraided me for speaking of my "dear old rifle." She accused me in her gentle mind of a homicidal passion for a lethal weapon. But I love a rifle as Grace loved a cricket bat, as an instrument of high achievement. I never fired a shot at any of God's creatures.

Stands Swine Market where it did? Old Mr. Dunn will have been gathered to his fathers and perchance the gun-shop has been reduced to the rank of an advertising chemist's. If so no wistful boy stands there at gaze; beholding in his mind's eye Crusoe's wild island; taming goats and teaching parrots, swimming out to the wreck and treating himself to a "large dram" (Oh, Dicky Dunn), feasting on griddle cakes and raisins and keeping, fearfully, a bright look out for cannibals.

We had few holidays at the brush-shop and little money to exploit those we got. But I had Odysseys at command which the Mayor of Halifax, with his pile carpets and musical clocks, could not buy: the range of the blue Caribbean and the run of Indian prairies; Robin Hood's haunts in Green Sherwood and Barnsley Dale; the lists at Camelot; the fields of Malplaquet and Agincourt; the wild marches of the Border. Oh, the Spaniards I rescued and the Moors I escaped from and the knights I unhorsed: between Dicky Dunn's and the gun-shop, in old Swine Market.

How little did I foresee, how little did my shop-mates foresee, how still less did the fickle Emily foresee that in later years I should go knight-erranting with defiant pen to meet fell dragons of privilege and prejudice: dragons who spat ink instead of fire; sullen

sarcastic dragons who loved the flesh-pots and hated all they failed to understand. The times were out of joint: Oh, cursed spite—but, no. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

More rosy, more ethereal was my boyish glamour. The glamour of Swine Market? The glamour of Halifax? Why not? It was there I grew to manhood. It was there began my great adventure, so that the ugly town sits closer to my heart than any other. The garden of my youth; the garden of my romance. Remember, please, that the lady of my delight was for more than fifty years my other and better self. The story of my life is the story of her life. Bereft of her sparkling presence it would be *Romeo and Juliet* with Juliet's part deleted.

Halifax to the casual eye was a barren workaday congeries of steep and apparently accidental streets. But I found there moon-bright flowers, Lydian airs and the apples of the Hesperides. Never since, not among the silken South Downs, on the miraculous Gulf Stream, in bright St. Ives or imperial Port Royal, has my fancy fared so richly. Childhood, adolescence, starry eyes and happy singing; these, with love's shy mysteries, sustained me in the grey old town.

In my eighth year we lodged with an old lady, Miss Mills, in Bull Close Lane. She was a stout woman, heavy on her feet, and had a strong plain face, like Rembrandt's famous portrait. Lacking physical grace and charm, she was hospitable, motherly, most generous of her oven-cakes and roasted apples. She was the first person I heard address a child as "love," which she pronounced "loove." Old Halifax seems to me like Miss Mills; undecorative, perhaps a trifle dour; but rich in comfortable words and cordial surprises.

XI

OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT

THE parson, a stranger to me, but a very agreeable, sociable sort, had been extolling woman. His voice sounded pleasantly through the deep bass rumble of the train as he continued, with a smile: "You agree? And the fact that we learn with years the better to honour and appreciate women is sufficient compensation, were there no other, for growing old. But there are other compensations, and those numerous. Do you not find it so?"

I said, for this humorous parson was voicing my own thoughts, that I found some advantages in the increasing years and few causes for regret.

The parson smiled. Then the smile faded away, and a thoughtful shadow clouded his expressive face. "That," he said, "is good wisdom. Now, as one pursues this pilgrimage of life, the old friends, the boon companions, fall away. One by one, as the years wane, our dear ones leave us. So that before one passes the half-century one looks back along the traversed road and sees by the wayside many gravestones. That experience, I take it, is universal."

I said yes, and asked him did he ever lie between a sleep and a sleep and tell over the names and conjure up the faces of those comrades who had fallen out of the march?

"I do," said the parson, "and they are so many now, our dear dead. Yet there is no despondency in

the thought. And do you not think our faith in a future reunion with those who have drunk their cup a round or two before is the best of all Christian apologetics?"

I was thinking of that parson a while ago and of what he said to me in the train, and my mind went back to the days of old lang syne.

When I was a boy, still on the callow side of my teens, a strolling singer was wont to haunt the neighbourhood where I passed hungry and laborious days. He was an elderly man, suggesting a broken-down opera singer, and he used to sing melancholy songs in a sad baritone voice to the accompaniment of his guitar. When the parson talked to me I saw again that pathetic figure, as I see it now.

"Where are the friends of my youth,
Where are those cherished ones gone?"

he would sing, and, being a sympathetic child, I used to collect a dumb pain in the vacuum where my dinner should have been. And this, mind you, though I was not yet come into my youth and had no lost friends to deplore. That, however, was years ago. Now it is otherwise.

Thinking back to the friends of my youth I recognize with a smile that most of them were girls. That was due partly to natural bent and partly to accident. I worked among a lot of girls, and I met others in singing classes and at concerts and at flower shows, and on cheap trips to the seaside or the lakes. They were pure-minded, bonny, jolly Yorkshire girls of the working class, and my association with them coloured my sentiments towards the sex, so that when I read a lot of rubbish in the papers about women and girls, I remember those young friends of mine and I wonder.

Those girls, many of them pretty, were well spoken, good-hearted, and wholly frank and natural. They

liked singing and they liked fun, and they liked smart hats, and they liked boys, and they never thought of pretending to be other than they were.

And here is one characteristic of their friendship which is, I think, worth recording. Those girls could make friends with a boy and accompany him to concerts or meetings, or the theatre, without affectation and without ulterior designs. They would be friendly and intimate without any attempt at flirtation. They were delightful. I suppose their attitude was sisterly; I do not know. I never had a sister.

There was Ruth now. I have forgotten her surname. She was a dark, rosy, dimpled child of fifteen, with eyes like a seal. I went with her to several shows and parties. The last memory I have of her she sat by me at a concert, and I retain the impression of her little white hand lying on her dark dress like a snow-drop on brown soil. And I don't remember any more. She vanishes from my remembrance as a figure fades from a cinema screen.

There was Deborah, but that was not her name—a wee, pale, quick-witted girl of my own age, with sparkling eyes. We were great pals. But one night, after we had been to the opera, as we bade each other good night, I asked her if she would go again tomorrow, and she laughed and said: "No, George is coming home." George was her fiancé. So that was that.

And there was a bonny girl I met at the haymaking. We had a great dance together, and became what a friend of mine called "terrific pals." And I heard from her later—about thirty-three years later. She was a widow, and was employed as a restaurant cook in New York. I told her in my reply (she wrote on a matter of business) that I remembered her as a pretty girl in a lavender hood, and she paid me back in my own coin. Said she: "I remember quite well.

We danced a lot. You had big eyes and dark hair with a wave in it, and did look nice."

Dark hair with a wave in it. What are you laughing at? The hair is no longer dark, and the wave has receded, leaving an almost naked expanse of shelving shore. Heigho! I get more like Shakespeare every day.

Lilith, so I will call her, was different. She was my first love. A slight, willowy girl with blue eyes, an ivory skin, a Greek profile, and pale gold hair. She seemed to my young adolescence an ethereal presence descended from the stars. Ah, that was a wonderful dream! It comes but once, even to the fortunate, and can never be forgotten. Could the vintners coax such divine intoxication into their flagons they might roll in guineas.

What a rosy, scented, spiritual experience! I never spoke to my divinity. No one ever guessed my passion. And it must have endured for several weeks. Then Fate bowled me down a curly one. "Play that, cocky!" Fate seemed to say.

So Lilith passed out of my ken. And a few years, a very, very few years later, she married, and she died young, the pretty creature: "Thou snow-white apple blossom down to the earth art fallen."

And there was Rachel. She was a quiet, undistinguished, neutral-tinted girl, like a little soft brown mouse, the sort of girl one would not notice in a crowd. But I sensed at the back of my head that she was as sweet as a chime of bells and as full of love as a black-bird is full of song. And I felt that if I took hold of her small brown hands they would hold me till death and find me at the day of judgment. But Fate had tossed down that curly one. I was in love with another girl. Well—it might have been. I hope some worthy boy had the great good fortune to find himself enfolded.

Then there were boys. But the boys were mostly my seniors by several years, and I was not of their set. They were fine lads, straight and clean, and being good cricketers were of my heroes; but it was not among them I found my first male friend.

He was an artist, and his name was Henry. He was very clever and refined, and had a soft, warm voice. I never met a gentler man, and he was kind to me when I was rather sad and needing kindness, and I was very fond of him. He had one affectation: he never would admit to being surprised.

I will give a characteristic example of this peculiarity. I had not seen him nor heard from him for several years when one evening I knocked at his door. He came to the door himself, and said with his languid air: "Come in. Just in time for a chat." When we had talked a while he asked: "What are you doing here?" I took a small roll of silver paper out of my pocket and passed it to him. When he opened the paper he found a wedding-ring. He never turned a hair. Holding up the fateful golden band he asked quietly: "When?" I said: "To-morrow morning," and he passed me back the ring with the words: "Much happiness."

Yes. He was like that. But once, a few years before, he showed a quiver, though he would have denied it on oath. It was thus: we were going to a wedding, he and I, and as we walked along he asked if Sally would be there.

Sally was Fate's curly one. I said I hoped so, but he professed to disbelieve me. For years, he said, he had heard about her and had never seen her; "in fact," he said, "*mon ami*, I don't believe in her. She's a myth."

Then we turned the corner and met her. I am sure the great Henry was surprised. He stiffened perceptibly as he beheld a small lady, delicately pretty,

smiling joyously and holding out a tiny, well-gloved hand. He recovered himself instantly, but there was a faint flush in his cheek and he forgot his drawl.

Dear old Henry! Many years since he followed his good old mother and his charming sister into the land of shadows. A real artist, a real gentleman, a real friend.

O Artemidorus, farewell!

I must explain that in those years I was a romantic, rather melancholy, very serious boy and awkwardly shy. Hoping to make good, I worked hard to repair my ignorance. I taught myself arithmetic and some history and began on shorthand. I read Ruskin and De Quincey, Dickens and Thackeray, and some astronomy, and hoped to be able to pay for some drawing lessons some day. A day which never came.

And during those rather grey and anxious years I was much beholden to the friends of my youth. The Yorkshire folk are musical, and I had great joy of the glee singers and the waits and the hymns and choruses we used to sing in the trains when we took one of our strenuous pleasure trips together, some hundreds of boys and girls.

Fine young people, fine young people: the youngest of them, if still living, must have reached three-score and ten. They were such natural ladies, those working girls, and the young men so steady and yet so merry. Alas! When I think of those lovable young creatures and of all that I have been and done and suffered since we held hands together along the flowery way I am reminded of that verse of Omar's:

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the garden throw."

Yes, my friend the parson was right, white crosses are thick along that road we have travelled with footsteps ever slower and slower. Where are those friends of my young days? Is there one left? I do not know. I have one old friend of near fifty years' standing, but I did not know him in those far-off years.

Those boys and girls belonged to one of my other lives—one I lived before I joined the Army. When you join the Army you step over the frontier of a new, strange world. And you come back changed, as a traveller from another planet.

I returned after some seven years to find little boys and girls getting married. You know what an embarrassing trick these children have of growing up. You take a little girl by the hand and buy her chocolates and give her a kiss, and watch her trip away, and then you go and get on with your job for a few years, and turn up again to be introduced to a tall, self-possessed lady in evening dress who smiles at you over her fan, and asks if you have read Kickowowski's novel, "Under the Hissing Knout."

Or you run across little Tommy Blades at a cricket match and find he has grown a bulge under his white waistcoat and a set of boilermaker's whiskers. You stare at little Tommy Blades and he explains that he is on the shilling side, because, "dammit all, a fellow has to shell out nearly all he earns to the tax collector!" after which he coughs, and says: "Have a weed, old bean?"

Well, well! "The almond tree shall flourish and the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail." It is written. So let it be. We are old and "the bird is on the wing."

But the days of our youth are but as yesterday. I can still remember the girls' bright eyes and kindly smiles; I can hear the fresh young voices singing

OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT

“As the moments roll” and “Since first I saw your face.” I can still project my astral self into the crowded train for Scarborough and join in the chorus of “Shall we gather at the river?”

And, by the way, shall we gather at the river? I wonder. Meanwhile, good night, sweet shades and pleasant dreams. Ah! “He that tossed us down into the field: He knows about it all; He knows; He knows.”

XII

THE LEAN HIGHWAY

IT may seem somewhat of a euphemism for a runaway apprentice to call his tramp from Yarmouth to London a "walking tour," but that is just the point of this story. I was a fugitive from "justice." I had only a few shillings in my pocket, I had no work and no prospect of getting any. I had to put up with scanty fare, and I had a high old time and enjoyed myself immensely.

Yes, it was a delightful holiday, and the ingredients of the feast were youth, novelty, adventure, hope and fine weather. That was fifty-nine years ago, and it would remain with me as a fragrant and sunny memory if I lived to be five hundred.

Let me introduce myself: I was twenty; romantic, innocent, and of a modest and friendly disposition. I was capable also, as it seems, of a sort of methodical rashness, for I had thrown myself, ignorant and friendless, into the world with twopence in cash and the clothes I stood in.

"If I succeed," I told myself, "it will be well. If not—one can die. There is nothing more than death to fear." After which I stepped out with a light heart and a keenly inquiring mind. I wanted to learn things and to see the world. "It will be all right," I said, with a shrug of the shoulders, and having earned a few shillings and spent one or two most disagreeable nights in Hull, I took the boat to Yarmouth.

It was characteristic of me that, rather than wait for the boat for London on Saturday, I went on the Yarmouth boat at midnight on Friday, thus entailing upon myself a tramp of 124 miles. The fare to London and the fare to Yarmouth were the same, five shillings.

Foolish? Impatient? Yes. But I have noticed during my earthly pilgrimage that it is not always the wise course which leads to happiness. There is such a thing as luck. Providence is often good to fools. So, happily, are women.

On the boat was a poor woman who was very ill. The North Sea is bumpy. As she was quite helpless, I made her a couch of old sails under a kind of penthouse, and I sat upon a coil of rope and nursed her baby. That also, I am glad to remember, was characteristic.

We got into Yarmouth about one o'clock on Saturday afternoon. I went to the railway station, found an advertisement of Horniman's tea with a large map of England attached to it, and planned out my route to the City of Golden Pavements, writing down the names of the towns to halt at, and allotting the distance for each day's march. I was, as I have said, a methodical boy.

The way, for a considerable distance, lay near the coast. The air was sweet and clean, the fields were fresh, the hedges gay with flowers. After nine years in a dull, smoky factory town where the climate had been described as "nine months winter and three months cold weather," I appreciated the change. I saw every bird and flower. I looked with delight at the tall trees, the snug cottages with their pretty gardens, the great muscular horses pulling the plough, and the heaped-up summer clouds in the moist blue, sailing "like ships upon the sea." And I came by the sea to Lowestoft, but not to dally there; my goal

was Wrentham, nineteen miles from the starting-point.

A few miles out of Lowestoft, as it was falling dusk, it being then perhaps six o'clock, on the 13th of May, I came up with a couple walking slowly before me. A young girl and a sailor. The sailor had "vine leaves in his hair," and seemed quarrelsome. As I drew level he called on me to stop, and as I walked on lurched after me, the girl tugging at his arm and panting: "Leave the boy be: leave the boy be."

An amusing rencontre, with a simple remedy. I was a fast sprinter. I bounded into the centre of the road and gave the hardy mariner an exhibition of pace. I think he must have been astonished. Possibly he thought I was a ghost and had vanished in the mists. I neither saw nor heard him again. I hope he was good to the girl.

An hour later I met with a pleasanter adventure. It happened thus. I had come into the village of Wrentham and had halted outside the Eagle Hotel to consider myself. I was tired, I had not tasted food since Friday noon, and I had a few shillings in my pocket. Had I known anything about the ways and the prices of hotels I should have fared on. Fortunately I was ignorant and trustful, and, entering the Eagle, I presented myself, dusty, bashful, and without luggage, at the office window, and asked if I could have a room.

The landlady, a comely, kindly, comfortable lady, regarded me steadily, without disfavour and without cordiality, from her little window, through which I glimpsed the dull shine of copper vessels and the glint of portly flagons, so that I thought of Tom Smart and the inn where he found the old chair.

She asked me whence I came and whither I was bound, and with a few apparently casual questions drew my story out of me as easily as she could have

drawn a glove from her own plump hand. Then, with a smile, she said: "You have walked from Yarmouth. You will be tired. You would like some tea. You will be comfortable here. We have plenty of room. This is an old posting-house; I will send you to the coffee-room."

She touched a bell, and a neat waitress, with sparkling black eyes and cheeks "like the red, red rose," led me into an oak-panelled apartment, where blazed a great fire, and there I was served with excellent tea and bread and butter, and plum jam and new-laid eggs, and the eggs were served with black pepper. I had never before had eggs with pepper, and I have never since eaten one without.

I did not see the lady again that night. After tea the maid showed me to my room and left me. Then for the first time I was afraid. The room was big and handsome, the great mahogany four-poster had rich hangings. There was a fire in the grate, and on the dressing-table were two lighted candles in silver candlesticks. "Oh! What will they charge for all this?" was my first scared thought. But I was twenty, and I was tired, and sleep is a great comforter.

In the morning I had more tea and eggs, and the lady came in smiling and asked how I had slept, and said she was afraid I should be very tired before I got to London, which was a long, long journey. So that, finding her so motherly and kind, I made bold to ask for my bill. At that she smiled again. "Oh, your bill," said she; "that will be a shilling, which you may give the maid."

What did I say? I don't remember. But I do remember that, when I was a short distance down the road I looked back and saw the lady and the maid standing by the door of the hotel, on the square space where the coaches used to draw up in Mr. Pickwick's

time, watching me set out on my quest for the Golden Pavements.

The lady's name, as I learned nearly fifty years later, was Mrs. Lucy Fiske. She had been dead about forty years, and I had never been able to thank her. Bless her kind soul, wherever she may be. She "was werry good to me, she was."

That day, Sunday, I walked to Saxmundham, twenty miles. The day was hot and I was thirsty, so that, late in the afternoon, spying a pretty young Lady in her front garden trimming her roses, I asked if she could oblige me with a cup of water. She gave me a cold stare with her bright blue eyes and answered: "Certainly not. The servants have to fetch our water from the well. We have none to spare for tramps." Well—I was a tramp, so I tramped on.

And by and by I saw a stout, elderly woman in a cotton dress and a hood who stood knitting at a cottage door, and I asked her for a drink of water. She gave me the same kind of look I had got from Mrs. Fiske, then she said: "Truly, boy, you do look weary, and it will be dry on the roads. Coom you in and I'll get you a cup of tea, which be near ready, and my husband will be here in but a little while." I went in and had tea with those good folks, and the husband, who was a brickmaker, bathed my feet, doctored my blisters, and gave me a pair of clean woollen socks. Then I thanked them and moved on. And it did not strike me then as strange that we neither asked each other's names nor gave them.

During this "walking tour" my commissariat arrangements were the simplest. In the morning I had breakfast. About noon I had a pennyworth of gingerbread and a drink of water, if I could get it. At eight I had my tea and went to bed.

It was on my longest stage, Colchester to Ingatestone, via Chelmsford, twenty-eight miles, that I went

into a small, dark shop in a narrow shabby street to buy my penny ration of gingerbread, and met another friendly woman.

She was a small, thin woman with a worried face. How is it that the women who keep little dark shops always have anxious, careworn faces? She began, as the others had, to ask me leading questions, and when she had my story she shook her head and dissuaded me very earnestly from my quest of the Golden Pavements.

"Don't you go there, boy," she said; "go back home, since you have a home. What will you think to do in that wicked place?"

I said I should look for work and hoped to get it, adding, with youthful optimism, that London was a big city.

But the little anxious woman had her answer ready. "'Tis a big city," she said, "but there do be a lot of people there. Do you remember that, and think to go to your own home. But I know what young men are, and far-off fields be green."

Far-off fields are green. Yes, I was learning things. I was getting lessons in life and human nature. But why were women good to me? That I could not understand. I was not a good-looking youth. I was shy and awkward. It was not the girls, either, but the women who befriended me. I did not solve the riddle for many years. For, indeed, how should a mere lad recognize the maternal instinct, or a boy realize how he appeared in the eyes of mature and benevolent women?

The mystery is no mystery to me now. As a youth I was so obvious an innocent, at once so poor and so hopeful, that every nice woman I met felt impelled to mother me and help me with her riper wisdom. The procedure varied little on first meeting. It began with a steady gaze, and was followed by

MY EIGHTY YEARS

an expression of amused interest, perhaps a slight smile.

Then came questions and words of suggestion or advice in tones of sympathy akin to pity, but always with a warm goodwill. I am a lot older now, but have changed but little in that regard. On that walking tour I learned several things, and one of the best was reverence for women. That lesson was worth all the hardship and fatigue.

And then my road lay through beautiful country, and I was young and the weather was perfect; and I drew steadily nearer to the muddy, shabby, fussy, over-crowded vulgar City of the Golden Pavements. Oh, a charming holiday, so that when I put up at an inn in Essex, not many miles from London, and met a recruiting sergeant of the Royal Scots, I was ready to laugh at him and with him, and enjoy his bonhomie and his military swank.

How much did that holiday cost me? Say about eighteenpence a day. For that I got my first taste of freedom, my first experience of Life, my first knowledge of the beauty of England. Love of the common people, love of the women, love of England: those were some of the things I learnt in that foolhardy expedition.

It is not the most expensive, nor the most elaborate, nor the best-planned holiday that gives most pleasure. After all, one seldom gets anything out of a holiday but what one puts into it. My brothers, take pepper with your eggs; it is an excellent digestive, and as you enjoy the frugal meal ponder well these lines from a book called "The Looking-Glass," by Dr. Frank Crane:

Woman is a born civilizer. Whenever possible she ought to be side by side with man; otherwise he runs down at heel and becomes second-class generally.

The only reason that I am satisfied to be a man is that I have the

THE LEAN HIGHWAY

privilege of living with a woman. Think of having to live with men only!

Tradition has it that the angels are all male. There are no she-angels mentioned in the Bible. If I get to heaven and find that it is for men only, I will surely look for another place.

I wonder where Dr. Crane acquired that wisdom. Did he, as a boy, run away and tramp the roads and get entertained by angels unawares? It is when we need women that we learn their value. It is when we trust ourselves fearlessly to her protecting arms that we find the goodness and loveliness of Mother England.

XIII

LIGHTS OF LONDON

TO leave the mean streets of a murky town for the green hedgerows and the open sky is a pleasant change, but the way into London from the east is disenchanting. I started for the Golden Pavements on the 13th of May and arrived on a Friday. Not good omens, though I did not think of that at the time.

London, as I found it that morning in 1871, did not show me a hospitable or inviting countenance. Fleet Street and the Strand were noisy, dirty, very shabby, and very crowded. The people seemed to me, in my lonesome, anxious mood, a hard-faced, sharp-set, unkindly mob. Everyone was in a hurry: no one seemed to know anybody else. The traffic roared and rattled, the human streams flowed endlessly along with a dull thudding and lispings of feet.

I did not feel at all like Whittington. I felt like a helpless, useless intruder. What was one more human atom amongst those millions? Another flake in a snowstorm, another wasp in the nest; nay—I did not belong to any nest, and I realized with a sinking of the heart the truth of the little worried shopwoman's warning: "It is a big city, but there do be a lot of people there."

I have seen London many times since under varying aspects, but never has it struck me as so coldly hostile and forbidding as when I came upon it that

LIGHTS OF LONDON

morning after my heartening experience of the smiling fields and friendly inns of Suffolk.

For the most of that day I wandered about, gazing at London and the Londoners, and growing more and more painfully conscious of my own insignificance. London did not want me: had no use for me. London had carried on, busily, richly, monotonously, for centuries, without my valuable assistance. London had built the Tower, the Parliament Houses, the great squares, the banks, the railways, and the bridges; had laid out the parks, stored the museums, organized the police, and drilled its regiments for ages before I was born. London did not know I was born. London had not noticed that another ant had crept amongst its eager, bustling swarms.

All this I saw and felt before I bought a penny loaf and a cup of synthetic coffee and retired pensively to my sixpenny bed. The prospects of becoming Lord Mayor receded into the foggy distance; the chance of a job appeared disconcertingly elusive. Still, there were the Drums.

The Drums, if I may be permitted the metaphor, were my sheet-anchor. Behind the chill, hard menace of the streets I seemed to hear them faintly, with their luring throb and mocking rattle. The Army? Why not? The sergeant at Brentwood had seemed gay and hearty, and looked very smart in his spotless uniform.

To-night I would sleep, and to-morrow I would go out upon the Golden Pavements and see whether or not I could scrape up the price of a meal. "The back of my hand to you, London," was my thought as I got between the sallow sheets. Besides, I was in love, and when a boy is in love there is one star that shines in the foulest of weather.

There were jobs to be had in London. One

could see that from the crowded advertisements in the papers, but the papers gave one no idea as to the numbers of hungry applicants who were after them. With a light heart and an empty stomach I joined the hopeful throng. I walked long distances and waited in long queues, and climbed long flights of stairs, and met with curt refusals, just like the rest.

When I was "fed up," in the modern, not literal, sense, I would seek Long Acre, where they sold the largest three-halfpenny saveloy, and would then walk into the New Cut, where they sold the largest penny loaf, and would look up a drinking fountain and—dine. And every evening, as I climbed into my dubious cubicle, the jolly old Drums sounded nearer.

One night, when I had treated myself to two-pennyworth of *à la mode* beef for supper, I heard a young voice pleading with the waiter and the waiter answering monotonously that it was "no use talkin'" and "it couldn't be done." I looked round the corner of the pew in which I was feasting and beheld a small, lean boy *vis-à-vis* with the tall, lean waiter. It was like Oliver Twist appealing to the starveling apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*.

I asked politely what might be the business in hand. The business was commonplace and simple. The boy, aged fourteen, orphan of a dead soldier, had tramped in from Aldershot, thirty-four miles, and wanted a bed. A bed cost sixpence. The boy had only fivepence-halfpenny. The boy was exhausted; the waiter was inflexible. Rules are rules. I produced the needful coin, ordered some more *à la mode* beef and "pressed the bashful stranger to his food." The boy, his name was Henry, told me he had tried to enlist as a drummer, but had been rejected. He seemed a nice kid, and we agreed to beard the giants Gog and Magog together.

It was not wholly unamusing: our life as kindred

LIGHTS OF LONDON

gutter-rats. Sometimes we held a horse, or carried a bag, or got a ton of coal in. When we had the coppers we bought bread: and when we had no coppers we fasted. Lodgings we abandoned: too expensive. We lived alfresco. Sometimes we slept on Waterloo Bridge, sometimes on a doorstep. Once Harry luxuriated for the night in a baker's cart; and once I dozed standing up between two pillars outside Her Majesty's Opera House. That house stood on the site of the present Carlton, as I reminded the High Commissioner of Australia when I dined there with him in 1918.

We played this curious and somewhat strenuous game for more than a week. Then, one morning I woke up cold, in a recess on Waterloo Bridge, and found myself alone. Pinned to my sleeve was a small scrap of paper, on which was written in pencil: "Good-bye, I'm for the road. If nothing turns up, try the soldiers.—Harry." I never saw nor heard of the plucky lad again. If he is still alive now he will be about seventy-three years of age. But he was small and frail, and it is a hard world.

Few of my readers will remember the Amateur Casual. He was a journalist who spent a night in Clerkenwell workhouse and then wrote his experiences. I was not a journalist, but I was lonely and rather bored, and it struck me that a night in Clerkenwell Casual Ward would be interesting and amusing. So I joined the queue at the police office, where the waifs applied for tickets. This is what happened.

Amongst the crowd there was a blowsy, middle-aged woman without a hat or bonnet, who sat on the steps smoking a short clay pipe. After a while she glanced at me, only for a moment, then went on smoking. But soon she turned her dark eyes upon me with a fixed and curious regard. "What are you doin' here, boy?" she asked. I told her. She shook

her head. "Go away, boy, go away," she said. "You're not used to this kind of devilment, I can see that. Go away." I said I had no place to sleep and was dead weary. She would not listen: "Sleep in the streets, boy; sleep on the bridges, anywhere but there. It's the worst doss-house in London."

"But you are going there," I hinted. Then she laughed. "Oh, me!" she said, "it's good enough for me. But you're different. Child, child, don't be stubborn. Take an old woman's advice. Go away."

"Well," I answered, "I will do as you say," and I got up wearily. At that she nodded her head, stroked her chin with her big brown hand, and saying, "Good boy, good boy; that's sense; sons of my own," she put her pipe between her teeth again and paid me no more attention.

You must not think of me, gentle reader, as a young gentleman of culture, who had never known hardship or poverty. I knew all about them, and met hunger or cold as familiar things. It was raining and it was dark. I trudged through the mud and drizzle to Waterloo Bridge, where I turned into one of the recesses and was about to take possession of a corner, when, reaching out my hand, it was pushed away and a girl's voice said: "What do you want? Find a place of your own."

As I turned away I glanced back and saw a young girl sitting up against the wall of the bridge looking at me. She was thinly clad, bare-headed, and without a shawl. I stopped and asked her what she was doing there. She answered my question with another: "Who are you?" I said I was an outcast, like her. Then she stepped close to me, looked fearlessly into my face, and said, "I see. Have you a bit of bread or anything?" And on my replying in the negative (like a Cabinet Minister, forsooth), she went back

LIGHTS OF LONDON

to her corner saying: "Well, blood's warm, chummy. Come and sit aside o' me."

I tied my neck-scarf over her head and put my arms about her and sat between her and the biting wind. Waterloo Bridge is the coldest place in London. She was very trustful, and soon fell asleep and slept till morning, when the rumble of the carts and 'buses woke her. I had no money, and she was wet and cold and hungry, and clung to me as a refuge and a friend. What was to be done? She wanted to stay with me, but that was quite impossible. So I went to find the Drums.

Now it is a very curious thing to think of, but, do you know, I remember very little more about the child. She was a little girl, about sixteen or seventeen years of age, and I think she had light hair and grey eyes. When I enlisted I got three shillings and some coppers, and I went to meet her and gave her the money. But I cannot remember saying good-bye, and I never so much as asked her name. That spoils the story as a story. In a really proper tale, perhaps I ought to have met her years later and married her. But the bald fact remains that I never heard of her again.

XIV

THE QUEEN'S SHILLING

I WALKED from Yarmouth to London—a hundred and twenty-four miles I think it was—in bright May weather, and through the first green pleasant country I had seen since I was ten years of age. And I tramped the streets of modern Babylon lonely and wondering in the crowd, and found, as Mr. Micawber found, that a man of my abilities was not required. Finally I found myself on June 1, with empty pockets and an aching void where my dinner should have been, walking slowly past the Houses of Parliament.

It was then and there I met my fate, in the form of Sergeant Thomas Ison, of the 6th Dragoon Guards, the Carabineers. A fine man was Thomas; tall, lithe, muscular, handsome; straight as a lance, clean as a star, proud as Lucifer.

“Well, young man,” said he, looking not at me but straight before him, “how do you think a soldier’s life would suit you?”

I replied that I knew very little about it; upon which addressing the white clouds above St. James’s Park, he said: “The finest career for a smart, educated, superior young man like you; the very finest career.”

I asked was that his serious opinion.

He slapped his back with his whip, curled his black moustache, like Porthos, and assured a sulky-looking chimney-stack that, damme, it was no part of his duty to deceive any lad; that, now the short-

service Act was passed, a really superior young man might enjoy a six-years' picnic at Her Majesty's expense; that we were getting a superior class of recruits now; quite a superior class; that the uniform, dammit, was the proper dress for a man; and the irresistible magnet for the women; that purchase was abolished, and any fine young fellow might win a commission; and that as I appeared to be a really superior person indeed, what did I say to a drink at the King's Arms, while he ran the tape over me?

I accepted the invitation, and as we made our way to the King's Arms, Charles Street, Westminster, Porthos promised to do me the great honour of introducing me to some of the superior young men who had just enlisted.

He then said that, of course, I should join the cavalry; that it was the thing for a gentleman, and that he reckoned I was just about five feet six, which would entitle me to the felicity of joining the Hussars.

When I said that I was only five feet five the gallant sergeant, without a blush, congratulated the upper windows of a shop upon the fact.

"So much the better," said he. "You shall have your pick of seventy crack infantry regiments—best in the Service. Far easier life than cavalry life. More time to spare; no brute beast for a master."

Arrived at the King's Arms, I was introduced to the superior young gentlemen, and I am afraid we were not too favourably impressed with each other. Superior young gentlemen they might have been, cheerful young gentlemen they did not seem; clean young gentlemen, they were not. But Porthos was proud of them. Porthos assured the portrait of a tall, lean person in tight breeches, a flat hat, a high-waisted coat, and Prince Albert whiskers that it was a pleasure to a non-commissioned officer to feel that he had secured for the Service so many superior

recruits, and that as soon as he had run the tape over me he was morally certain that I should, so to speak, fill his cup to the brim, by, as he put it, "accepting Her Majesty's 'Robert' (God Bless Her!) and making a man of myself."

Her Majesty's "Robert," reinforced by three days' pay, at one and fourpence a day, was peculiarly welcome to me, as I imagine it had been to the dejected young aristocrats who now sat drinking cheap porter out of pewter pots, or smoking rank tobacco out of cutty clays.

So the tape was run over me, to the intense gratification of the magnificent Carabineer; and after I had answered several questions, as a guarantee of good faith, and had promised to meet Porthos at ten o'clock on Monday morning at St. George's Barracks, the splendid shilling was put into my hand, and I drank the health of the Queen in stone ginger-beer, and shook hands on the bargain.

It was then the sergeant made his prophetic speech. Looking straight over my head, closing his heels, and laying his white-gloved hand on my shoulder, Sergeant Thomas Ison uttered these remarkable words: "You will never regret entering the Service, boy." I said I hoped not, and the sergeant, flicking his whip in the direction of the superior young gentlemen, went stamping and jingling downstairs and out into Charles Street in search of more superior food for powder.

I was about to follow him when one of the young gentlemen addressed me. "Blimey, mate," he said, "you don't look 'appy. 'Aven't you listed for the line?" I said I had.

"Then," he said, "you're all right. You'll 'ave a gentleman's life. No stable call; no ridin' drill! I'm for the blinkin' 'Ussars. Blest if I 'aven't a good mind to do a bunk."

"You needn't do a bunk," said a red-haired youth

with a muffler round his neck; "he'll swap yer, if yer arsk 'im."

"Swap me!" exclaimed the other young gentleman. "No blinkin' fear! Think I'm goin' to walk when I can ride?"

"What!" said a third young aristocrat. "You on a 'orse? I say, chaps, Bleary on an 'orse. Oh, God!"

"I shall 'ave 'im," said the first gentleman, "and I'll ride up 'Olborn, proud as Punch, an' when I comes to old Bogey's *à la mode* beef shop I shall go in an' kiss his ginger-'aired daughter, an' if he serves me any of 'is lip I shall cut 'is 'ead off wiv my sword."

"Your sword," said the third patrician. "Is sword; Bleary's sword. Oh, God!"

The concept of Bleary in gorgeous raiment, mounted on horseback, and armed with a sword, appeared to depress the company severely. They fell back into moody silence, and I walked thoughtfully away.

My only night in the receiving-room at St. George's Barracks was not blessed with much sleep as the superior young gentlemen who had just joined the Colours spent a good deal of the time in alarms and excursions; those in our room and the room across the corridor carrying out repeated raids upon each other to capture and recapture blankets and pillows.

About six o'clock I was awakened from uneasy slumber. The sun was shining through the windows, the drums and fifes were playing on the parade, and a fat sergeant, nearly filling up the doorway, was addressing us in a voice more powerful than sweet.

"Come, come, gentlemen, gentlemen," said the fat sergeant, "don't oversleep yourselves. The chocolate will be cold; the eggs will be hard; and the colonel will be tired waiting to have the pleasure of your company." Having thus delivered himself, the fat sergeant walked into the room, and said, in a deep and solemn voice: "Yes, by Jasus!"

"Please, Sergeant," said a snub-nosed youth, lifting his head from the blankets, "is the bath warm?"

Then the sergeant opened his shoulders and spake his mind. I had never heard a sergeant speak his mind before, and I was impressed.

"By God's rattle," said the fat sergeant, "the sun's burnin' holes in your blankets. Rouse about, you insanitary frequenters of the casual ward. Turn out, you gutter-rats, you unchristened sons of mendicants. Bless your eyes! Bless your souls! God bless you!" or words to that effect.

We turned out like one man. The sergeant's eloquence was very convincing. Thence to the common wash-house for a cold swill—a very cold swill—and thence to doctor's inspection.

It was soon over. And then we dressed and passed the colonel, and were marched to the police court and sworn in. The court was crowded, and a woman was giving evidence against her husband for assault. The corporal herded us together, and we held on to a greasy Prayer-Book tied with string while the clerk gabbled over some speech of which we understood not a word but the beginning: "You shall well and truly swear," and the end, which was: "S'elp you God! kiss the book; Usher, pull down the window; silence in court; woman, look at his worship when he speaks to you; next lot."

And we were soldiers, and entitled to be dealt with under the Mutiny Act and the Articles of War, and were sworn to defend a grateful country at the rate of sixteenpence a day, including beer money, and with deductions for groceries.

"Now, you devils," said the corporal, "fall in. By the left, quick march."

I did not sleep in barracks that night, but treated myself to a more sure and firm-set pillow. The next

THE QUEEN'S SHILLING

morning Sergeant Ison gave us his blessing, repeating his assurance that we should never regret entering the Service, and we were marched across Hungerford Bridge, fourteen of us, to catch the train for Southampton.

XV

COMRADES ALL

ON the pier at Cowes we were met by a rather supercilious colour-sergeant, who eyed us with cold scorn, said "Come on, you," and, turning his back upon us, stalked haughtily away.

It was a four-mile walk from Cowes to Parkhurst, and all the way our escort kept a little in front of us and spake no word. I am sure he suffered agonies, and that he did his utmost to convey the impression that we did not belong to him. But his bearing seemed to shout the words: "If I be not ashamed of my soldiers I am a soused gurnet." And I don't believe a single person passed by us on the road who failed to understand the situation or to enjoy its humour.

At last, to the general relief, a big iron gate became visible beyond some trees, and a tall sentry in black busby and scarlet stood to the shoulder and gazed at us with a kind of wooden amusement.

Now the colour-sergeant bade us pull ourselves together and not roll in like a flock of sheep, whereat, to his no small astonishment, we promptly formed fours and marched past the guard-room in step. There were, as it appeared, only four of our fourteen who had not been in the Militia or the Volunteers.

The colour-sergeant marched us round to the orderly-room, and reported our arrival to the sergeant-major. The sergeant-major came out to look at us.

The sergeant-major was a tall, slight man, in a peaked cap and a blue patrol jacket. He stood with his hands in his jacket pockets, and a thin cane under his arm, and looked over us and through us, with a dull, dim eye which could see anything that could be seen by a hawk or a lynx.

"How many of 'em, Colour-sergeant?" asked the sergeant-major.

"Fourteen, sir."

"Ha!" said the sergeant-major. "Pity you didn't lose half of them on the way. The Service is coming to something! March them to the receiving-room, and hide them!"

With that the sergeant-major turned suddenly upon his heel and strode away with a sudden and truculent manner, like a game-cock.

Next day we were posted to companies and served out with clothing and belts, and I was thrilled when I found that now I had a rifle. A black-avised young Fusilier, known as Pompey the Pirate, showed me how to clean my traps and amused me with his artless prattle till well on in the afternoon, when he dressed for walking out and departed.

When Pompey left me I took a stroll round the lines, and then went to see the Retreat made on the parade. The drums were formed up, the drum-major in front. The bugles sounded the Retreat (sundown), the drums and fifes played a quickstep and marched down the parade and back again.

It was a fine spring evening. The glow of the sunset cast the shadow of the trees in long blue lines across the red gravel, the homing rooks were trailing overhead in loose order, and the drums and fifes sounded quite soft and pretty as they marched away. The general effect was one of almost idyllic calm. I returned to my barrack-room, where I found a bandsman named Webb and a private named Peters,

sitting on one of the beds side by side, discoursing of their loves.

"By the living Jingo, she's like waxwork," Webb was saying.

Peters winked his eyes, wavered unsteadily as he sat, and replied: "It's a pity she drinks."

"Drinks!" Webb sprang up and nearly over-balanced himself. "Drinks! She's a Sunday-school teacher, and you're a dirty Irish liar!"

So saying, the bandsman smote Peters on the mazzard, and knocked him off the bed. Having done this he staggered out of the room, and Peters, rising, rushed at me. But he was not dangerous. I pushed him over again, and then explained that I was not a bandsman, and persuaded my comrade to go to bed.

Thus passed my first evening in the service of the Queen.

XVI

“OURS”

THE Ramchunders, for so I shall call the regiment to which I had been posted, was an old “John Company” corps, and had been in India since its formation in the reign of Queen Anne.

The Ramchunders had now returned to England, with much hot sunshine in the blood and a good deal of money in their pockets, and at the time I joined were, in the words of their own argot, “going wide.”

I have never known a regiment go wider. All, or nearly all, the men had money.

Most of the privates had ten or twenty pounds each; some of the sergeants were said to have hundreds. This wealth had to be spent, and in the nick of time some three hundred Cockney recruits, as keen as knives and as hungry as wolves, turned up to help in the spending.

The game, while the money lasted, was “played quick.” Every night the guard-room was crammed with prisoners: every day there was a whole company of defaulters at pack-drill on the square.

In fact, the gallant Ramchunders went very wide indeed. Which reminds me of a story told by an old soldier of my company, named Peter Lynch. It was soon after I joined. Peter had just been told that “Alphabet” Smith had been discharged with ignominy for theft. He was disgusted, and expressed his feelings thus: “The Service is no good since

good discipline has been relaxed. In the old days, bedad, any galoot of that kind would be drummed out. I remember a man of my company when I was in the 'Dirty Half-Hundred' [the 50th Foot] was drummed out for burglin' the canteen and calling the senior major an Irish goat. When they used to drum a man out they cut the facin's and the buttons off him, and turned his tunic inside out. And the regiment was formed up at open order, facin' inwards. And the prisoner was marched down the lines to the tune of the 'Rogue's March,' wid the drums and fifes behind him, until he came to the gate, whin the youngest drummer kicked him out.

"Well, this traunen was marched down the red lane and duly kicked through the gate. And whin he was through the gate he was a civilian, d'ye mind? And he turned about as proud as a grand duke, and says he to the colonel, he says: 'Ye may dismiss yer men, Colonel,' he says, 'they are the dirtiest lot of blackguards I ever inspected in me life,' says he. And bedad, the colonel was that wild he looked as if he could ate him."

They kept us as recruits pretty busy. We were at drill, or school, or gymnasium from six in the morning to six in the evening, if we had the luck not to be at club-drill from six to seven. And then we were at liberty to clean our arms and accoutrements or scrub tables. But we were young, and the air was good. And the gymnastics, the drilling, and the regular hours and plain food began to tell. In a few weeks we were straight and smart, and stood and moved lightly. In the bronzed, alert, upright young soldiers no one could have recognized the mob of assorted ragamuffins who had tramped in the dust from Cowes. And as our appearance improved, and as we got to know our work, and did it more smartly, so our instructors modified their language. We were

“ O U R S ”

no longer rascals or cannibals. We were men. It was “Steady, men,” or “Be alive, men,” or “Order arms more smartly, men. Oh, my God, look at that old man climbing up his rifle.”

Indeed, we began to be rather proud of ourselves, and imagine we were soldiers. But we had yet to go through another mill. And the miller was the terrible sergeant-major.

XVII

ANACREONTIC

THE routine of our new life varied little from day to day. It began with a rather dismal bugle call at about 5.45. This call was "The Rouse," but it was known to us as "The Donkey." It was the "quarter" for Réveillé. "The Rouse" was to wake us, the Réveillé meant turn out. But we turned out before Réveillé, for the 79th Highlanders lay in the same barracks, and between our two calls it was the jovial custom to march a brace of pipers up and down the lines and charm our ears with "Hey, Johnny Cope." I am one of the few Southrons who like the bagpipes. My English and Irish comrades used to get up to swear.

After "Johnny Cope" came the Réveillé. First of all, the buglers, massed on the square, sounded the call. Then the drums beat "the points of war." Then the drums and fifes played a kind of reel, called "Old Mother Grey-Goose." Then our corporal began to shout, and we carried our beds and bedding outside, laid them on the ground, and ran to the wash-house.

At half-past six we were dressed and marching to the gymnasium.

Breakfast was at a quarter to eight. It consisted of a pound of dry bread and a pint of coffee. The coffee came from the cookhouse in large cans, and was served in white delf basins on deal tables innocent of table-cloths.

Dinner was at one o'clock. It consisted of beef or mutton and potatoes. There was not too much dinner. But I found then that to leave the table unsatisfied means being free for work and free from drowsiness. And thus I learned a good habit, which I have never lost—the habit of eating sparingly. I believe I have been able to keep well through long years of sedentary life chiefly because I have always been a small eater. I am convinced that most men eat too much, and that a good many of our ills are due to overfeeding.

Tea—well, we had a pint of slop in a basin and half a pound of dry bread.

Supper could be had if one went to the canteen and paid for it.

On the whole, rather a meagre diet for growing lads who spent the whole day working in the open air. But I am bound to acknowledge that we thrive on it, and that we looked well, felt well, and were well.

Our chief pleasure of an evening was to listen to the band playing for the officers at mess. The Ramchunders had a good band and an excellent bandmaster, and it was jolly in the summer evenings to sit outside the huts and listen to the music.

It was while listening to the band one fine moonlight night that I first made the acquaintance of Johnson, "the Perpendicular Recruit." Johnson was lean and tall and rigidly upright; hence the nickname. It was rumoured that he had once served in the Mexican cavalry, and that he had been an officer. He was a very gentlemanly fellow and eccentric enough to be noticeable even among so many eccentric characters.

"I have noticed you before," said Johnson, "listening to the band. You are fond of music."

I said I was very fond of music.

"I notice, also," said Johnson, "that you look at the moon."

"Don't you?" I asked.

"Of course I do," he answered: "but hardly anybody else does. Don't you remark that, Blatchford? If you hung up a halfpenny Chinese lantern on a pole the whole regiment would stand and stare at it. But never a man looks up at the moon. Damme, they don't know it's there."

"I believe you are right," I said.

"I am right. A few nights ago I was looking out of the window at the moon, when one of the men asked me what I was staring at. When I told him, he thought I was mad. If, my dear chap, I had been looking at the disgusting pictures in a French journal, the whole barrack-room would have crowded round and been ready to fight for the paper."

"Yes, yes," I said.

"Poor fools," said Johnson, "they imagine they are sane."

"Do you ever talk to them like this?" I asked.

Johnson shook his head. "No," he said; "if you talked sense or culture to these animals it would end in a fight. They have no soul for anything but beer. By the way, talking of beer, come and have a liquah."

When Johnson asked a man to "Come and have a liquah" he was transfigured. I have never seen another person put such a poetry of expression into so trite a speech. He stood very upright, closed his heels, raised his right hand gracefully, as if to suggest the quaffing of nectar from a golden chalice, and smiled the smile beautiful.

But I was a strict abstainer and I told him so. He dropped his eloquent hand, shook his head sadly, and said: "That, if you will pardon my saying so, is a mistake, Blatchford."

"You think so?" said I.

"Yes," he said, smoothing his long, silky moustache, "it is a mistake, amigo. Take the good the gods

bestow. The moon, the music, and the beer. Woman is good, and wine is good, but the combination? Ah, Blatchford, come and have a liquah?"

I declined gently, but firmly, at which he sighed, and sitting down upon a form, began to roll himself a cigarette.

"Have you ever had a romance?" he asked me.

"I don't know," I said, feeling shy. "Don't you call this a romance?"

Johnson jumped up and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"A true remark, Blatchford," he said, "a devilish true remark. Everything in life is a romance. The music and the moonlight and the beefy troopers are romances. They are, by Heaven! The goose-step is a romance, in a way. Won't you come and have a liquah?"

I shook my head.

"You have been abroad, Johnson," I suggested.

"Don't," said Johnson. "The word has no meaning. Was I more abroad in Texas or in China than I am here in Parkhurst Barracks? Are you abroad now? Or do you feel at home, comrade?"

I admitted that the whole life seemed strange and foreign to me.

"Ah, so it is, so it is," said he. "I am a stranger here; Heaven is my home. Eh? That's an idea, Blatchford. And I would to Heaven I could convince you, my dear fellow, of the merits of the course I have just now invited you to pursue. Are you quite sure, Blatchford, that you will not come and have a liquah?"

I was quite sure, and at that we left it. But who would expect in the British Army to meet such a man as the Perpendicular Recruit? The fact is, one need never be surprised by any character one meets in that rendezvous of the unusual.

XVIII

THE SERGEANT-MAJOR

WE called the sergeant-major "Lightning." It was a good name—when you knew the man. Sergeant-Major James Sheldon was uneducated, unscrupulous, and wicked; but he was a clever man, a remarkable man, and the best drill-sergeant I have ever known.

He could drill the head off any other sergeant in the regiment. He knew more about drill than all the officers and sergeants put together. He could handle a battalion as a master-at-arms could handle a foil. He could "hold" the men as no one else could. He seemed to convert a battalion of ten companies into an organic creature. The men moved to his word of command as dancers move to music. You understood what he meant even when the tramping of the feet on the gravel drowned the actual words. He varied the sound and the pace of his command, and always gave the "moving word" on the proper foot. He could see eight hundred men at one glance, and knew every man by sight.

And he had a voice—ah, what a voice! A man could stand half a mile away upon the Newport road and hear "Lightning" drilling the battalion, and know what they were doing. His voice had the penetrative, singing quality of a Scottish fishergirl's. It was flexible, piercing, full of changes. It roared, it throbbed, it screamed, it droned, it barked, it hissed;

it had sharp, whistling notes, like the cut of a whip; and it never wavered, never broke, and never tired! I have never heard anything quite like it.

How long we "ringtails," as the old soldiers called us recruits, remained in the hands of the drill-sergeants I cannot now remember. I should say about two months; two months of hard work in sunny weather. At last we became proficient in hand and foot drill, and in manual and firing exercises; and the order was given for the sergeant-major to take us over.

There must have been three hundred of us, all young men between sixteen and twenty-two; and when we were formed up in column we made six respectable companies.

One bright morning they marched us out on to the great parade, and formed us up in quarter-column, and stood us at ease. And then—enter "Lightning."

We had never been in "Lightning's" hands before, and we were all eager, and most of us rather nervous. The great man strode on to the parade with his little stick under his arm, and walked along the front of the first company, glancing sharply at the lads as he passed.

Then he strode away, until he was quite fifty yards from us, and before we knew what had happened, he had got us.

One word, sounding like a pistol-shot, brought us to attention, four more, three of them short, and the last like the blast of a trumpet, and we were on the march. Every man gripped his rifle, squared his shoulders, shut his teeth, and opened his eyes and ears, for every man knew "Lightning" well enough to know that not a fraction of a second's inattention would be possible. We went at our work like a rowing eight in a boat-race. And "Lightning"

extended himself, and made us use every ounce we had in us.

“Look to your front, men, and don’t—hurry—the time. Lef’—right, lef’—right. By the left. Steady, steady, steady. By-the-left. Don’t wag your heads like a team of horses on May morning! Private Oates of A Company, get the step. Now mind this deploying on the march! There’s a man in the rear rank of No. 3 Company with his eyes glued to the gravel. Look up, man: you’ve dropped no money there. You spent your pay last night in the canteen. Mar’—dime: you’re dancing like a troupe of ballet girls in a pantomime. March, men: march, for the love of Heaven! Fowers—’ight! By the left. Oh, march, men! Will you march, God bless you! You can’t deploy until you can march. That’s better. Keep the time. Forward by the left. Oh, close up, men; close up—this isn’t the Lord Mayor’s Show! Trail your arms, Private Benson: you remind me of my old grandma trundling a mop. Front—turnna! Smartly! Smartly! Look at me, how smart I am—and old enough to be your father! Wake up, there, you lubbers in No. 2: do you think you’re going to a harvest home? No idleness! Now, mind this wheeling in quarter-column. Column will wheel to the left—lef’ wheel. Very good, men; very good: come round there, No. 4: column will continue the wheel—lef’ wheel. Good, men; good. I can drill you! And I will drill you! I can drill you on a dessert-plate. Damme, I can drill you on a three-penny bit!”

For an hour the sergeant-major manœuvred us about the square in the blazing sun, and all the time he boasted and swore and taunted us. Then we halted and stood at ease. We thought we deserved a rest, and had done well; also, we hoped we should be dismissed. But “Lightning” was only just begin-

ning. He had been merely feeling our mouths, so to speak. Now, as we stood to get our breath, he made the following short speech.

"Stand easy! Listen to what I say. I am the sergeant-major. I am *the* sergeant-major. Make no mistake about it. I'll have no nonsense! I am here to drill you, and you shall be drilled. I'll have the best you've got. I'll have all you've got. You shall soldier. Now, I'm going to handle you at the double. You can do it. You can do it. I will make you do it if I stop here all night. Men, I will have it. Men, there is one God, one devil, and one sergeant-major; and I'm the man!"

The next instant we were at the slope, and at the double; and the sergeant-major was rapping out a series of staccato commands as though we had been a many-keyed instrument on which he was playing a tune.

It was "Ri'-turn, ri'-turn, ri'-turn: lef'-turn, ri'-turn, lef'-turn, right-about-turn, lef'-turn, ri'-turn, ri'-turn," as fast as the turns could be made, until we grew dizzy and worried, and forgot the directing flank, when "Lightning" would screech: "Ferunt-turn." And we all faced different ways, and found ourselves a mere struggling mob.

This was what the "major" had played for. Instantly came the command, "Mar'-dime," and then the rebuke, "There's only one front, men, and you can't remember it. I've bought better soldiers at a fish-shop at two for three-halfpence, many a time. Forward, by the left." And then the game began again. It was hot work under the August sun, and "Lightning" was as good as his word: he "had all we'd got."

But such masterly handling, twice a day, for a week or more, made a marvellous difference. And after the "major" had marched us, and wheeled us, and

MY EIGHTY YEARS

formed us, and charged us; and after he had worked us through the bayonet exercise until we all moved "like one man," he paraded us proudly before the adjutant; and we were declared perfect, and were handed over to the sergeant-instructor in musketry to be taught to shoot.

XIX

ODD FELLOWS

WE had twelve men and a corporal in our mess and a weird baker's dozen of human documents we were. But the star turn was a pair of unconscious comedians: Tim Doyle and Larry Dolan.

Tim Doyle was a burly Irishman, with a heavy, good-humoured face, a chin like the toe of a boot, and a slow, wise smile. He was an excellent chap, and his ruling passion was politics.

Larry Dolan was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. He was one of the most comic soldiers I ever met, and that is saying much. He was short, and lean, with large feet and hands; and his small, dim eyes, his small, thin mouth, and his enormous and flexible nose gave him a strange look of wistful doubt and surprise. He was Tim Doyle's cot-mate and friend, and he loved beer as much as Tim loved politics.

Hour after hour Trunkey Dolan and Tim would sit side by side and "chew the rag." I think of them now, after all those years, with gratitude and joy. I laugh all over myself when I recall their names. They were lovely.

"Look at here, Larry, avic," old Tim would say, in his deep bass growl, "'tis no use talkin' to the omadhauns in this pultan, but be the seven shores iv Cork, bedad, the Rooshians an' the Prooshians 'll be full o' ther eye. D'ye moind me, Larry. Wid

the French all bruises and stickin' plaster, an' the divil a British fleet in the Adriatic, the good Lord Himself only knows what thim Rooshians and Prooshians do be after!"

"An' phwat the divil do they be afther, 'Tim?" Larry would inquire; and then the basso hum would begin again about the Rooshians and the Prooshians.

But no one ever got the glimmer of an idea what the black intrigues and diabolic alliances of the Rooshians and the Prooshians might portend, for when we pressed Tim he scowled darkly, and muttered and stammered that the Rooshians and the Prooshians were at the back of something not named, or at the bottom of something still in embryo, and would ultimately be the full of the eye of some person or persons whose identity was mysteriously veiled by the pronoun "they."

When Larry was, so to speak, "fed up" with the two stealthy and terrible allies, he would break suddenly into the conversation with one of his amazing stories. When Larry told a story he "conducted" it, as one might say, with his wonderful nose, which he could at will cause to travel about his face in a manner at once alarming and delightful. To see his small mouth curl itself into a peerless Irish grin, while his nose twisted itself nearly under his right ear, and to hear the sound, between a sniff and whistle, with which this action was "pointed," was to lose oneself in admiration.

"Och! The Prooshians, the curse iv Cromwell on thim, they're as deep as a bog-hole, and as tricherous, Tim. Bad end to 'em! Last night, as I was comin' along the Cowes Road, who the divil should I meet but Andy White, of H Company; be the token I had not a trauneen in me kick, an' me wid the thirst o' the ages upon me; and says he: 'Larry Dolan, be jabbers,' says he, 'an' me lookin' for a pal,' says he.

'What for?' says I. An' och, Tim, me jool!" Here Larry's nose curled under his ear, and one eye closed and the other squinted. "An' och, Tim, me jool, if ye'll believe me, he was afther findin' a sailor!"

At the word "sailor" Tim's face would flush, his eyes would sparkle, and he would say with emotion:

"Howly saints, Larry, what is ut ye're tellin' me?"

"'Tis the honest trut," Larry would answer, "an' we had the great time. Comin' back across the drill field at First Post, be jabers, I saw three blue stars dancin' in the sky; and I passed the sintry walkin' on a golden cloud o' glory."

Tim would regard his friend with deep earnestness, and inquire:

"Larry, man, is there anny of him left?"

Larry would curl his nose again, and with a wink and a sniff would answer:

"Whist! To-night, at the Anchor Brewery!"

Then Tim would rise up, pull off his tunic, reach down his soap and towel, and start for the lavatory without a word.

A "sailor" was a slang term for any person whose nature was so generous, and whose finances so sound, as to allow of the quaffing of many cups at his personal charge. A "sailor" was to a thirsty Ramchunder what a carcass is to the eagles. No Ramchunder worthy of his corps ever wasted a "sailor." With a "sailor" in the offing, even politics had to wait; for the Rooshians and the Prooshians were always with us, but a "sailor" was the gift of God.

When the two cronies had departed I was left alone in No. 3 Room, as usual, for in the evenings all the other men went to the canteen or to the town. Then, since I knew that most of them would return at the last minute, and some of them with vine-leaves

in their hair, I would tidy up the place and make down all the beds.

Often between the First and Last Posts at Tattoo I found myself holding a bed of state with five or six hilarious Fusiliers seated round me, relating their adventures or cheering me with their friendly talk.

They were strangely friendly to me, these men, and their manner towards me was a blend of respect and protection. I, on my side, felt quite at home with them, for I had already realized that among these dozen of rough, wild, and odd soldiers there was not one with a mean or a bad drop of blood in him.

Dimly, as in a glass darkly, I had begun to feel that the code of the world I had left was too narrow and too weak for the world into which I had come. Judged by that old code, these were bad men. But my sense told me that they were not bad men, but good men.

I had begun a new education. I was learning and unlearning. I was getting a fresh and wider understanding of the humanities, and my instructors were a handful of illiterate, dissolute, profane, and drunken soldiers.

XX

PARADISE

I MOUNTED picket for the first time in Newport, Isle of Wight, in the month of August, 1871.

We prowled about as usual for some hours, and nothing came of it. Then Bonass, the provost-sergeant, came and took me away. Bonass was a character, and not an amiable character, but of that anon. He had a hang-dog face, a snuffling, snarly voice, and he swore profusely. Also he was cruel, relentless, and treacherous. He took me down the High Street to the end of a narrow lane called Paradise Row.

"Now," he said, "this——street is out of bounds. See? Understand? No——soldiers are allowed down there. Draw your bayonet. Stay here till I relieve you. See? Don't allow any——soldier to pass. If you do—you'll be for the clink. Understand? You're a recruit, aren't you?"

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Very well. You obey orders, or you'll get a——court martial, and I'll cut your——hair to the——roots. Understand?" And he went away.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and, being late, the streets were quite quiet. I walked up and down for some time without any incident. Then out of the shadow across the High Street there came unsteadily the figure of a soldier. It was Larry Dolan—Larry, with a good many buttons unfastened,

no waistbelt, and his cap set crosswise on his head. Larry, in a condition which suggested that he had just left a "sailor."

Larry approached my post. Larry wanted to go down Paradise Row. Larry halted in front of me, and screwed his little eyes up till they were mere sparks, and performed wonders with his prehensile nose, which reminded one of the movements of an elephant's trunk. Smiling a mysterious smile, Larry said, in a husky voice:

"Ullo! Whist! I'm on a mark."

"You cannot pass here, Dolan."

"Per—Per—Private Doolan, please, shentry. Not so mushyer blooming Doolan. She! 'm on a mark."

"No road this way. Halt!"

"Halt! Who ye hal—hal—tin'? Got appointment with a friend. Lemme pash."

"No road. Halt!"

"Why, why—it's a ring-tail 'cruity. Standsh shide. May way. 'm on a mark. Donsher un-standsh? I'm on a bloomin' mark."

"Go away. This street's out of bounds."

"Look—look 'ere, 'cruity. I'll report you. She? I'll see colonel 'bout it—morninsh! Want to she friend. Bushiness! Mos' respectable man—beer-shop."

"Get, Dolan. Quick. There's the picket." Dolan reeled away.

A little while afterwards, through the scented, still air of the summer night, came the sound of a sweet voice—a girl's voice—singing. It was very curious. The voice drew nearer, now sounding more clearly as the singer came into the straight, now more faint as she turned the corner. Presently she appeared, just as Larry had appeared, from the same shadowy opening—the lane that led to the Anchor Inn.

She was a slight, fair, and pretty girl, a mere child of sixteen, with a light sweet voice of a fine quality, and she was singing "The Rocky Road to Dublin."

She crossed the road unsteadily—she had been drinking—came straight up to me, and laid her small hand on my chest to steady herself. She had a mouth like the opening bud of a flower, small white teeth, and large blue eyes; but the eyes were swimming and vacant, for the child was quite intoxicated. Now, I was a romantic boy, as I have said, and not yet one-and-twenty, and when that little girl laid her hand upon me and gazed at me with a pitiful drunken gravity, I did not feel happy.

"Whose little soldier are you?" asked "the Singing Linnet." This is what I learnt the soldiers called her.

"I belong to the Queen," I said.

The girl laughed.

"So," she said, "you're the Queen's little soldier. Well, if the lady gave a shilling for you, she ought to have ninepence change. Will you come and have a drink?"

"You had better go home, child," I said ruefully.

The girl laughed again.

"You're a silly little soldier," she said. "I'm goin' 'ome. There's my 'ome—down there. I live in Paradise. Good night, 'cruity;" and she gave me a push, blew me a kiss, and staggered away singing, "I want to be an Angel."

I listened to her voice until it died away in the hush of the summer night, and I thought three columns of uncheerful thoughts when she was gone.

When Bonass came to send me back to barracks I was standing like a wooden soldier—I had seen the Gorgon's head.

XXI

BEMBRIDGE FORT

WE went out on Detachment to Bembridge Fort early in November, and on the 16th, I was appointed lance-corporal. I was very proud, and rather bashful, for I expected rough as well as smooth weather and I very soon got it. One night, while I was sleeping the sleep of youth and good digestion, unpleasantness arose between Tommy Dagan and Ryan the Beauty. Dagan lost his temper, and reproached Ryan with being a bad character. Such a reproach is not allowed, and the next morning the Beauty reported the insult to the colour-sergeant, and I was called to the orderly-room as evidence.

“What’s this row between these men?” asked the captain.

I said, being young and ignorant: “I don’t know, sir.”

“Don’t know?” said the captain. “Aren’t you in charge of the room?”

I answered that I was, but was asleep at the time. The captain leaned back in his chair and looked at me through his monocle. “*What?*” he snapped out, with a metallic accent.

“It was late, sir,” I explained, “I was asleep and heard nothing of it.”

The captain let his monocle fall, opened his grey eyes very wide and ejaculated: “Good God!”

Captain Lawes was a good sort, very kind and a

real gentleman; but the idea of a corporal in charge of a room sleeping through a row was a painful shock to his military soul.

"Well," he said, stroking his grizzled whisker, "this is a damned extraordinary thing. This is the damndest most extraordinary thing I ever heard of. A corporal, and a *lance*-corporal, too, asleep in his room while a shindy is in progress!"

"It was near two in the morning, sir," I hinted.

The captain looked pained. The colour-sergeant stood bolt upright and appeared to be trying to swallow a cough lozenge.

"Why, *why*; what the *devil*, Corporal," said the captain. "Don't make the thing worse by offering excuses. If there's an unsoldierly thing, and a thing I hate, it's an excuse. Aren't you in charge of the room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then," demanded the captain, with the air of one who lays down the ace of trumps, "why the devil didn't you stop the row?"

"I should, sir, if Ryan had reported it," I explained.

But this seemed to increase the captain's disgust. "If he had reported it," said the captain. "If Grouchy had come up at Waterloo; if the rat hadn't ate the malt, the tramp wouldn't have married the milkmaid. You ought to have *heard* the row. How long have you been in the Service?"

I said, "About four months, sir."

The captain resumed his monocle. "How long have you been a corporal?" he asked.

"About a week, sir."

"Oh!" said the captain. "Ha! that explains the mystery; a boy cannot learn it all in a week. No, by Gad, not by a lot. But learn this of me. A lance-corporal must never sleep on duty and a lance-corporal

is *always* on duty. It is an understood thing, though not laid down in the book, that corporals, and especially lance-corporals, sleep with one eye open. Just remember that in future. Colour-sergeant, march in those two men."

When Ryan and Dagan stood before the captain he said in a tone of annoyance: "Look here, you two men, you ought to have been put in the guard-room; but the young corporal has been lenient and I shall let you off this time. Ryan, you can fall out. As for you, Private Dagan, you are the sort of man I know precious well and like precious little. Yes, by Jove. If there's a damned unsoldierly thing and a thing I hate like poison, begad, it's to find a man with good-conduct badges on his arm reproaching his less fortunate comrade for being a bad character. Ryan has been drunk at times and has done his punishment like a soldier. You may have been drunk and very likely have been drunk and escaped, for these badges, I know, are not so often given to a man for being sober as for not being caught when in liquor. Discipline is discipline, Private Dagan, and soldiering is soldiering; but to go for a man when he is down, damme, is the act of a cur. Fall back." And the captain lit a cigar and walked out, followed by his deerhound, his three fox terriers, his spaniel and his bull pup, each and every of which looked too well bred to go for one who was down.

When the captain was out of hearing the colour-sergeant curled his red moustache and said, "You're a nice daffodil. That was a fine yarn you spun the captain."

I said it was true. "True!" The colour-sergeant laughed. "True. Yes. But in future don't be so damned green, lest the cows eat you. A lance-corporal has no business asleep. It isn't on the board of orders."

BEMBRIDGE FORT

"It's not easy to be always awake," I suggested.

"Yes," said the "Flag"; "but it's possible to hear what happens when you're asleep: if you know your duty." And with that cryptic remark the colour-sergeant closed the incident. I did some hard thinking before I grasped the idea.

XXII

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

READER, were you ever wanted by the police? It is a thrilling experience, especially when it falls on a Christmas Eve. Before I begin my tale, I will remark that the famous couplet: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: It might have been," is not always justified by the facts.

I have twice had my fortune told by gipsies. The first one said: "You will make plenty of money; but they will not let you keep it." That was a good shot. I did and they didn't, at least not until I acquired wisdom. The second prophecy, or guess, was brief: a young gipsy woman met me in a lane and said: "You are a lucky gentleman; born to be lucky." As I was then in my seventieth year I knew as much about it as she did and she was right. Now you shall hear.

As a young recruit of twenty, then stationed in the Isle of Wight, I wrote a letter to my future bride. It was not a love-letter. We were not engaged and she did not know she was destined to marry me; but I did. Like the sensible and nice girl she was, she showed the letter to her mother, who, like the wise old dear *she* was, advised her not to answer. Naturally. What, to that simple-minded Christian woman, was Private Blatchford? Just a common soldier.

Were not soldiers wild and wanton fellows who never had any money and could not be regarded as respectable? As we say in these Georgian days, there was nothing doing. But my future mother-in-law, who was a perfect darling, had never heard the Napoleonic saying that the British soldier is too stupid to know when he is defeated. I got leave for the Christmas week and started for Halifax. Travelling in 1871 was not like it is to-day. I had to walk nine miles to catch the Ryde boat. Then I had to get a train, or trains, to Waterloo. Then I had to walk to King's Cross (could not afford to ride), take the train to Bradford and walk from Bradford to my mother's house, another nine miles, and I had to carry a heavy bag. I left Bembridge Fort at 6 a.m., and reached home at 1 a.m. the following day. During that journey I never slept a wink nor had a bite or sup; not even a drink of water. We boys had been well trained.

And the girl I had come to see was away in Manchester.

What about my good luck? Well, listen. I was a runaway apprentice and if I had been arrested before I was twenty-one the consequences would have been unpleasant. I could have been sent to prison for a month, then compelled to serve out my apprenticeship, and after that be tried by court martial for fraudulent enlistment.

So. My best course would be to lie doggo. Did I? No. I went swanking down town in regimentals and met one of my good, kind employers. I was like that; careless. But there my luck worked. Not trusting my good, kind employer I went home at the quick step and changed into mufti. My good, kind employer went to the Town Hall and applied for a warrant for my arrest. "You are born to be lucky," the gipsy said.

A friend of mine happened to be present when the warrant was applied for and sent a messenger hot-foot to warn me. I put my regimentals into a bag, embraced my mother, walked to a station some miles out of the town, got a train for Wakefield, changed at Wakefield and was in the pit at Drury Lane Theatre when the detective arrived at my mother's house to invite me to spend Christmas Day in "cool grot," or in other words, in a cell at the Town Hall. Luck? Yes. If my good, kind employer had noticed the number of my regiment on my shoulder-straps I should have been caught. But he was rather dense and had a weakness for rum, and in twelve weeks I was beyond the reach of the law.

It might have been. Yes. And Christmas Day in a police cell with prospective sentence of a month's "hard" as New Year's Gift would have been neither grateful nor comforting. What big things some trifles are. If that spiteful employer of mine had been as observant as an old country woman I met in the train on my way back to Portsmouth and had noticed my number, what a difference it would have made. The old lady in question who sat opposite to me in my compartment, after looking at me attentively for some time said: "Excuse me, sojer; but do you know my son?" I asked was her son a soldier, was he in my regiment and what was his name. She told me he was a sojer and gave his name, and when I said I did not know him she was surprised. "Whoy," she said, "that be queer now when he be next number to yo." But, I protested, "How do you know my number, ma'am?" The old lady lifted her hands and shook her head. She thought I was trying to bluff her. "Whoy," she said, "yore number be on your shoulder. Beant it 103? Well moy son's number on his shoulder, it be 102. So now, young man." And I had to explain to her that the thin

red line was not numbered in that way, and that as the 103rd Regiment was in the Isle of Wight and the 102nd was in Bengal her son and I were not acquainted with each other. The old lady, with a "Well, we live and learn" expression on her fine old face, went on to tell me all about her son. He was, it appeared, a most excellent youth, and as I listened to his praises I wondered whether he had ever been wanted by the police.

XXIII

AN IRISH DR. PAINE

DR. PADDY FIVE-EYES is one of my happiest memories; I have blessed him often; I wouldn't have missed him for worlds. His name was not Five-Eyes, of course. We called him that because he wore a pair of spectacles and an eye-glass, all at once. His name was not Paddy, either; we called him that because he was rather Irish.

Oh, he was a jewel! He was quite too beautifully utter.

I had fallen in a high jump whilst skylarking, and had twisted my arm. I went to the hospital and showed it to the doctor.

"'Tis a sprain," said the doctor, "nothing more. But a sprain is sometimes a long botheration."

He rang for the hospital sergeant, and went and stood with his back to the fire. He was very short and very stout, and as he stood with his arms under his coat-tails, and his spectacles gleaming, he reminded me of Mr. Pickwick.

"This," said the doctor, "is one of those footling cases that are more trouble than they are worth. A compound fracture of the thigh, Sergeant Mullins, like that of the blackguard Benning—Denning—Stenning—phwat is the rascal's name—the man of the artillery? Brady? True. A compound fracture like that affords one some satisfaction and brings one some kudos; but a devil's trick like this, a mere

twist of the joint, with perhaps an injury to the ligatures, is neither fun nor profit. Had your arm been broken, Corporal, 'twould have been more satisfactory. This thing may keep me tinkering with you for weeks."

Encouraged by the benevolence of the doctor's face and the freedom of his manner, I ventured to express a hope that he would not keep me in hospital. Now, to display the least desire to avoid hospital was to tread on the doctor's tenderest corn. Directly I spoke his face changed. His brows knitted themselves into a frown, his eyes blazed with anger, and he snatched up a blackthorn stick and struck the table a sounding thump.

"You impertinent young spalpeen!" he roared; "what do you mean? Not take you into hospital! Is my hospital a prison, where men are punished; or a hotel, where they must pay? Do you think I want ye here consuming good rations and destroying Her Majesty's medical comforts? Sergeant Mullins, let this fellow be placed under arrest; damme, put him on low diet, and apply a stiff blister to the small of his back."

"Yes, sir," said Sergeant Mullins.

"Not take ye into hospital!" the doctor began again. "If ye're immortal soul depended on my sending ye to medicine and duty, I'd keep ye in hospital. For what is ye're soul to me? I'm paid by the Queen to look after your worthless carcass. That is Government property; but the soul of you is no affair of Her Majesty's, and'll never take a chill when you're done with it."

With this the doctor slapped on his hat, took his shillelagh under his arm, and, whistling a bandy-legged bulldog with a black-eye, bounced out of the surgery in a huff.

"Sit down," said Sergeant Mullins coolly. "The doctor will be back just now."

And sure enough in a few minutes the doctor returned, smiling and rosy.

"Sergeant Mullins," said he, "have this man's arm painted and strapped, and put him in No. 2 Ward. Did I order him under arrest?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"Well, on second thoughts," said the doctor, "you need not put him under arrest."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant; and he led me out.

"Oh, Sergeant Mullins!" the doctor called as we went along the corridor.

"Yes, sir."

"What diet did I say?"

"Low diet, sir."

"Then," said the doctor, "ye need not mind the low diet, but just feed the rascal well."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"And—ah—Mullins!" the doctor shouted after us as we went upstairs.

"Yes, sir."

"Don't trouble about the blister," said the doctor.

And an hour later the doctor came to see me. He asked me a great many questions; and then sat looking at me curiously for some time.

"Ye don't drink?" he said.

"No, sir."

"Nor smoke?"

"No, sir."

"Ye have good sight; as I have not. I would give ten years of my life for pair of eyes like yours. Do ye shoot well?"

"I have done fairly well, sir."

"Have ye a girl?"

"No, sir."

"Don't get one, they are a shocking botheration. Have ye a watch?"

"No, sir."

"Tis wise. A watch costs as much to keep as a small family, and there's clocks in every town. Sergeant Mullins."

"Yes, sir."

"Give this boy a glass of wine with his dinner; and let him read if he wishes."

"Yes, sir."

And that was my first experience of Paddy Five-Eyes.

A few weeks later there was an affray in Brading between the police and some of our men. Two of ours, one with his head tied up and one with a broken finger, were reported sick; and I marched them with the sick party to the hospital.

"Where did ye get that cracked head, ye rascal?" the doctor asked Private Page.

"It was in town, sir. A policeman struck me."

"Oh, listen to the innocent pride of his mother!" cried the doctor. "Listen to the bleeding lamb! So the police attacked ye? Did ye hear that, Sergeant Mullins? Why, ye impudent blackguard, what do you mean by going about the public streets assaulting peaceful constables and bringing black shame on the Service? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, as I'm ashamed for ye. Come here till I mend ye're head. Oh, look at it! Who did that?"

"A policeman, sir."

"Deed, he must be a nice man. I wish I had him here."

The doctor attended to Page, and then turned to the other man. "So you've broke a finger. Faith, I don't suppose ye did it pickin' daisies. What devilment were ye up to? Hey?"

"I fell, sir."

"Ye fell. Sergeant Mullins, the gentleman fell. And what the devil were you doing to fall? Answer me; and none of your tricks."

"I was running, sir."

"Oh, Mullins, he was running to Mass! What's your name?"

"Moore, sir."

The doctor banged his fist on the table. "I'm double d——d if I didn't think so!" he shouted. "Sergeant Mullins, this is the blackguard that ran away. Oh, the holy saints in heaven! This is the soldier that ran away from a couple or three of country policemen, and left his comrade to get his head broke. Did he run, Page? Tell me? Tell me, or be my mother's soul I'll—I'll put a blister on ye're stomach as big as a barrack-room bread-tin! Did he run? D'ye hear me?"

"He—— There was a lot of police, sir. I couldn't tell whether he ran or not, sir."

"'Tis a lie!" said the doctor. "I heard of it. I am disgraced; the Army is disgraced; me hospital is disgraced with such a wretch for a patient. Ye ran. Ye left ye're comrade to be killed. Oh, the divill! Oh, shame!"

Here the doctor threw his hat on the floor and kicked it, threw his extra eyes into the letter-tray, and, snatching up his cudgel, began to dance.

"We are disgraced!" he roared. "The colours are shamed. Oh, give me a drink an' the flure, an' I'd fight all the blanky bobbies in Brading."

Whilst this was going on, the escort, the sick, and Sergeant Mullins stood stiffly to attention, and looked as wooden as Dutch dolls. No one dared to smile. When the doctor had had his fling, he became suddenly calm and professional.

"Sergeant Mullins, put Page in No. 3 Ward. Put this man in a ward by himself. Put both on low diet. Corporal, find my spectacles. Mullins, give me some smaller splints." When he had dressed Moore's finger the doctor put on his hat and called his dog.

As he reached the door he turned. "Sergeant Mullins," he said, "look at this dog. Look him in the face."

"Yes, sir."

"'Tis the first time since he was pupped that I have ever known the animal to blush. But then, Mullins, he has never imagined until this day that a grown soldier wid a fist like a two-pound loaf and a head as thick as a fifty-six-pound shell would turn tail to the civil power. Page, you are a man. You have done credit to your regiment. But this"——
The doctor gave a shrug of contempt and stalked out, followed by his blushing bull.

He was a great man, and I could write about him all day.

XXIV

LADIES OF SORROW

EARLY in the spring of '72 we went to Alder-shot. Several bands played us in. We marched to our encampment to the tune of "There is a Happy Land" and "I want to be an Angel." We, the "Old Toughs." We went under canvas at Rushmoor, and we had strenuous times until November, when we were moved to the West Block Infantry Barracks. It was hot in the Long Valley and the sham fights were trying, and our dinners of greasy stew with black sand as condiment did not afford us unalloyed delight.

But time passed, and in December, being then a sergeant and rather proud of myself, I went to Halifax to find my destined bride. I had to find her really as I could not court a parental snub by calling at her home. But I was to be lucky. A few days after my arrival, being in town, I turned a corner and met her. We had only a few minutes together as she had to get back to her work at the milliner's. We stood and exchanged the usual commonplaces, smiling at each other. I was in uniform, all spruce and shining. She was as fresh and pretty as a bunch of flowers. When she said: "I must go now, Robert," our eyes met. She had, as I said, bright dark eyes, like a robin. But when her gaze was full and earnest her eyes dilated, and her face was serious and beautiful. That was a long look. We did not speak. We did not touch

hands. But we were engaged. No, it was more than an engagement, it was marriage. We were as surely married as if we had been to church. After that silent pledge nothing but death could part us. If I might translate that clinging fatal gaze I should say it meant: "Yes, always!" It was not an *asking* look—we *knew*. It was an unspoken vow. We were married. We had to wait a long seven years before the parson blessed our legal union, but there never was any formal engagement, or proposal. Only that deep solemn look: "Yes, always."

I remember reading a book: "How Men Propose." It was an anthology of imaginary avowals and proposals culled from many novels. It was very absurd. And yet, what is a poor novelist to do? Most real proposals, I believe, are as mute as ours. A look, a touch; perhaps a kiss. That is enough. They have plighted their faith. The courtship is begun. Are lovers' tongues so silver sweet by night? Few lovers are eloquent. There is no need of set speeches. Often the proposal takes the shape of a glance and a smile, maybe a little sigh, a whiff of scent and the kiss of shy hands lingering. The girls toss laughter to their lovers as they might toss roses. I remember another book, called "Logic Taught by Love." Well and good, but love is not taught by logic.

There is a communion more direct and intimate than speech. "Yes, always. In this life and thereafter." What more could any man or woman ask or promise? A few days before my wife died she awoke from a half-conscious sleep and looked at me. I sat on the side of the bed, holding her hand, and again we exchanged that long and silent gaze and it bore the same message as fifty years ago: "Yes, always." Well, well, I was afraid this autobiography would turn out to be a love story.

The girls in the Aldershot dance-halls and taverns

worried me. I was only a boy and I had a reverence for women. I wanted to help them and could do nothing. I made one attempt and failed completely. And I was shy and hated to intrude. There came a very young and pretty girl to Aldershot that winter. She had followed the Hussars from Leeds. She was known as "Yorky," poor child. Hers seemed so pitiful a case that I spoke to her one night, advising her to go home before it was too late. She shook her head, answering that it was too late already. I offered to help her, but she refused. A few weeks later I met her in a dance-room and tried again; but she had been drinking and I could not move her, and at last she turned her pretty eyes on me and said: "Shut up, boy. You are too good-looking for a preacher. I have chosen my life and I mean to see it out."

She "saw it out," poor "Yorky," and was not long about it. In a few weeks she was pale and blowsy, her dress was soiled and untidy, her beautiful hair a slovenly mop. She was seldom sober. She was lost. You remember what Rossetti said of "Jenny." "Poor handful of bright spring water flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face." The last I saw of "Yorky" she sat in a gig between a police officer and a warder, with handcuffs on her girlish wrists. She was seeing it out. Somebody's daughter. A girl of seventeen!

A friend once told me that the Army had been my university. It certainly taught me strange things. Those poor girls, now, I felt for them a kind of wondering respect. They were not wicked. They were friendly. They were loyal, and their queer humility and simple candour of speech were very touching. I heard one of them in a dance-room say to her partner, a young sergeant: "Do you ever think how we girls are shamed and humbled to give pleasure to you men?" That speech, spoken so quietly and gently, made the boy turn white. It was as

wounding as a sudden stab. They were vitally and awfully womanly, those sullied flowers. They could love loyally and their jealousy was vehement and dangerous. I am speaking now of the girls. They were truly tragic after they had "seen it out."

We had in our company an old soldier named Sinclair. When I say old I mean that he might be forty years of age, with perhaps fifteen years' service. One day he and I and Corporal Cave sat talking. Bill Cave was a Nottingham boy, smart, likeable, clever. Poor Bill.

Said Sinclair: "It's mortal hard for a young fellow to keep straight."

Said Bill: "What do you mean by straight?"

"I mean just straight. I went wide as a lad. I was pulled up by an idea."

"What was the idea?"

"Like this, Corporal. Those girls you dance with, do you ever imagine one of them a mother? If she had a baby, what kind of a life would the wean have?"

"Hell!"

"Suppose, then—suppose the baby was *your* child."

"God!"

"So," said Sinclair, "that kept me straight, that idea. It scared me straight. Man, think of it."

I thought of it. I think of it still. But Bill died young. Poor Bill. I was glad to escape from Alder-shot. My university.

A TRAGEDY IN BLOCK B

LOLA WILLIS was the prettiest girl in the regiment. There were not many girls in the regiment, but she was the prettiest and she was very pretty. A fact which Sergeant Leslie Dorking had noted to his own unease. Lola's slim figure, beaming eyes and pouting, rather petulant lips, interfered with his cricket and kept him awake sometimes for a full half-hour after Lights Out. Lola was turned sixteen and Leslie was twenty-one. "Of course," the sergeant told himself, "I'm rather old." A painful consciousness which in no wise discouraged his attempts to secure the lady's friendship. Progress was, however, very, very slow. Lola seemed a princess out of his star. As she never entered the lines and had not begun to attend the dances, his attentions were confined to an occasional shy greeting when she passed him going to or from the married quarters.

But if not everything, at least something comes to him that waits, and it fell upon a day that Leslie, as orderly sergeant, had to carry a message to "the Flag," a married man, and on his return was startled by the sound of a woman sobbing. Hurrying to the entrance of B Block he came upon a scene which made his heart, as we would have expressed it, "change gears." Lying on the stone steps in pitiful abandon, the pretty Lola was weeping passionately. Good God! Who had hurt the sweet little woman? What trouble

had bowed her dear head to the dust? Sergeant Leslie Dorking saw red. He clenched his fists, he clenched his teeth, an amorous knight in case to juggle a dragon. But no dragon was in evidence, only a distressed damsel, victim of fell crimes. The sergeant stepped forward. "Lola," he said, in a tone almost a sob, "Lola, I say. What is wrong?"

"G-go *away*," the princess gasped. "G-go *away* I tell you."

Leslie hesitated. Then tried again. "Can't I—help, Lola?"

"N-no, n-nobody can. Oh, oh, oh!"

Sergeant Leslie was deeply moved. He could not leave her like that. He could not bear to see her suffer. Her grief seemed desperate. She was all broken up with weeping. Her sobs shook her delicate young body. He knelt beside her and said gently: "Tell me, Lola. Try to tell me;" then with sudden passion: "Don't cry, dear, don't, don't."

The princess still crouched, quivering and sobbing, then, as he touched her softly, she turned her head and gazed at him wildly with eyes like rain-soaked pansies, and shaking hands and lips. "I c-can't t-tell you," she panted: "M-mother—oh! oh, oh! M-mother—w-won't l-let me h-h-have a—guinea-pig."

Sergeant Leslie rose up hastily. He realized that he was most certainly "too old."

So she married the corporal of the Drums.

XXVI

FRESH FIELDS

IN the spring of 1873 I went to the School of Musketry at Hythe; a matter of moment to a young sergeant but of no interest to the reading public. My stay there was marked by those trivial everyday incidents, any one of which may "initiate" a life's happiness or cause a man's death. Who knows what awaits him round the most unpromising corner? When I had been there about a week I went, as orderly sergeant, to show orders to the officer of the day. I knocked at the door, and it was opened by one of the loveliest women it has ever been my good fortune to see. She was a servant maid and was so surprisingly beautiful that I stood and gazed at her and could not speak. She was used to such homage I suppose, for she smiled and took the orders without a word. And that is all. Nothing happened. But what might have happened?

Shortly after the shock of that "vision entrancing," two jolly young sergeants of the Rifle Brigade having taught me to swim, my pride took me so close to Death that he almost clawed me in his clutch. It happened thus. Waking at four o'clock on a bright June morning I bethought me of the "glassy, cool, translucent wave," and making a bee-line for the beach I stripped quickly and swam straight out. It was delicious. When I had gone about two hundred yards, feeling the least thing tired, for I had swum greedily,

I had just enough horse sense to turn back, and when I turned I found the tide against me. There was not a soul in sight and I felt in my bones that I should have to fight for my life. I was not scared nor flurried. When I climbed the Culver Cliff a year before I had been in a blue funk, and had a hard task to pull myself together. But on that still morning, in that cool sea, with Davy Jones waiting for me, I pegged away steadily until my arms felt like lead and I went down in ten feet of water. I went down with my mouth shut and my eyes open. I could see the pebbles and small crabs quite clearly. I kicked the bottom hard and shot up swiftly, and when I got up I found I could swim. That green twilight below was not inviting. Heavily I struggled on, and when I sank again the water only just covered my head, and I managed to paddle and scramble ashore, where I dropped exhausted on the shingle. A close call. Had there been another fifty yards to swim many successful persons would have been spared considerable annoyance in the later years.

At Hythe I made acquaintance with another of our sergeants, named Norris, and this began a friendship which lasted fifty-three years without a cross word or a wry thought. He was one of the kindest and most amiable of men and as honest as Horatio. But we shall hear of Joe again. Together we qualified as Musketry Instructors and as Marksmen. Pleasant times, with youth and summer weather. Also, there were smiles, one of which was provided by the gallant colonel commanding the school. It was like this. We were at firing exercise, and just as we got the order, "Both ranks kneeling, ready," the colonel came along. He halted, slapped his leg and called out: "As you were." We rose up and he then addressed us: "God bless my soul, Sergeants, a squad of young men, getting down on the knee in that languid manner. I am

surprised. Look at me. An old officer of nineteen years' service. See how I can move!" With that the colonel sat down smartly on his right heel. But smartly as he went down it was nothing to the celerity of his rising up. He had forgotten his spurs. We smiled; but not then. In the Army you never smile on parade. You learn to laugh to-morrow.

From the fresh breezes and easy times at Hythe we went back to the baking sun and blinding sands of the Long Valley, where they kept us on the run for some weeks and then packed us off to Dartmoor for manœuvres.

Dartmoor can be very humid. In fact, of the twenty-eight days we were on cloudy Dartmoor only one was fine. But we were young and fit, and there were smiles. For instance: we were advancing in skirmishing order over rough ground, when Private Macnamara, jumping over some whins, put up a cock pheasant almost from under his feet. Macnamara knocked the bird down with his rifle and tucked it into his haversack. But the captain, who was close by, called out: "Sergeant Snelling, tell Macnamara to throw that bird away." Snelling shouted the order, and as he did so came a cropper over a half-sunken boulder and winded himself. When he caught up with the line again he asked Mac if he had got rid of the bird, and Mac said, "Yes, Sergeant."

At six that evening, when we reached our camping ground the captain told me to fetch Macnamara. Mac came up, saluted and stood to attention. Said the captain: "Did you throw away that bird as you were ordered?"

"Yes, sorr," said Mac.

"Very good," said the captain, "how much do you want for it?" So Mac got half a crown and the captain got a delicate supper.

There was some fuss about the game at Dartmoor.

The farmers complained to Head-quarters that the men took rabbits. But a quantity of silly rabbits getting under the feet of the skirmishers becomes a temptation to hungry soldiers. Not ours, of course, not the Ramchunders. Yet we, with others, were suspected. And one evening, after a bloodless but protracted battle, we were drawn up in line at open order, and the colonel on horseback in front with his back to us said to the adjutant in a loud clear voice: "It seems the farmers accuse our men of taking rabbits. It's quite absurd; but the brigadier is coming round to inspect the haversacks. I don't believe he will find a rabbit in any haversack in our regiment." And he did not. All our haversacks were clean of sin. And yet I have heard men grouse about their big bear-skin busbies.

XXVII

NEWPORT, MON.

ABOUT this time I made a friend. She was a lady friend, a sergeant's wife, and we called her "Mother Bowers." She was a small, sallow woman, with a head of hair like a bonfire, dancing little brown eyes, a wounding tongue and a heart of gold. She could wrangle and fight and smoke a pipe and was not afraid of gin; nor of gunfire, nor of cholera, nor of drunken men. And I loved her and she loved me. And this is why.

Mother Bowers had born to her a belated baby. She had lost two children in India, and there was an interval of ten years before the belated one was born—dead. That is to say, the doctor said it was born dead, but Mother Bowers said the doctor was a most unpleasant kind of a story-teller, and that the child lived quite a minute.

Now, this was the sore point. If the baby drew one breath he was entitled to a funeral—a corporal and six men. If he never drew that breath he would simply be put into a box and interred.

Mother Bowers went to see the colour-sergeant. She wanted a funeral. The colour-sergeant thought she was silly and stood to the interment. Mother Bowers wept. She expressed the most unfavourable opinion of the doctor. She took her oath that her baby had a soul, that its soul was now in Heaven, and she demanded her rights as an honest woman, who

had washed for the company for twenty years, and had nursed Ramchunders, living and dead, in cholera camps in India.

"The doctor said so," persisted the "Flag."

"The doctor was full of wine, the baste. I tell you, Colour-sergeant, the child's in Heaven."

"I wish to——" the "Flag" began, but did not finish. Then Mother Bowers shed tears and wiped her eyes on her apron.

"Go away," said the colour-sergeant, "go away."

Then I, seeing an appeal in the eyes of my superior officer which meant, "For the love of heaven take her away!" and feeling sorry for poor Ma Bowers, suggested that if the colour-sergeant did not object I would get some of the men to volunteer for the funeral party, and I would take charge of the ceremony myself.

"God bless you," said Mother Bowers, "you have a good heart! I'll never forget you."

"Oh, have it your own way!" snapped the colour-sergeant, and retired hastily.

So I got twelve men, and we put on our full dress and our side-arms, and we buried our little brother with all the honours.

It was a trifling service, and one not worth a second thought, and I should have forgotten it if Mother Bowers had. But "Ma" was not built that way.

If I had gone out into the Bay of Biscay in a gale and saved Mother Bowers on a hencoop, if I had charged a troop of Afghan cavalry and brought back old bald-headed Bowers from under the horses' feet, Mother Bowers, I am convinced, would not have counted it to me so much for grace as she counted that common civility paid to her child. She never forgot it.

When I was very ill on detachment she came up and sat with me, and nursed and tended me until the doctor came. I dare say she saved my life. She told every soul in the regiment of my noble conduct. She

would make, or buy, or steal anything she thought I should like to have. And when I left the regiment she blessed me and shed tears.

In Newport we got a good many recruits, some of whom were good soldiers and tall fellows, while others were more than a little lower than the angels. We had two Queen's bad bargains in H Company. One of these was known as "Boss Bailer," because he had a cast in one eye. Boss was a smart young man, and, except for the slight squint, a good-looking one. Also he was a wonderful whistler. He could imitate any bird, and could whistle like a flute or a piccolo. Thereby hangs the tale.

Boss got a "billet" as servant to one of our lieutenants—a rich man. Boss's boss went away on a few days' leave. Boss took leave also. And he took all the money and rings his master had let loose, and he put on a suit of his master's clothes. And he did not come back. And the police never even found a clue.

A year later there arrived an escort from the "Green Linnets" to fetch a private who had deserted from the "Linnets" and enlisted in ours.

And the sergeant of the "Linnets" and our sergeant-major were walking down the lines, and as they passed the drum-room a drummer named Bromage, who whistled wonderfully, was sitting at a window whistling a jig.

"Who's that whistling, sir?" asked the "Linnet."

"That's Bromage," said the "major;" "he's a remarkable whistler."

"Yes, he's good," said the "Linnet;" "but we have a better."

"Indeed," said the "major."

"Yes," said the "Linnet," "he can whistle like a piccolo and he can whistle like a flute; he can imitate any bird that sings; I have never met his match."

The "major" stopped and looked at the "Linnet" thoughtfully. "That's curious," said the "major."

"What, sir?"

"That whistler of yours. How long have you had him?"

"He's a recruit, sir; joined a few months ago."

"Ha!" said the "major." "Young man? Tallish? Dark curls? Slight cast in one eye?"

"That's the man, sir," said the "Linnet," raising his eyebrows and opening his mouth.

"Good!" said the "major." "When you get back put him in the guard-room—he's a deserter from ours. His name was Bailer. He's a thief."

And so Boss Bailer was caught and sent to prison, and was discharged as a bad bargain. But it was an odd chance.

If Bromage had not whistled that day at that moment, Boss Bailer might have gone scot-free.

But the light-hearted and light-fingered Bailer was quite a mild and pleasant young fellow in comparison with one Private Adams, whose truly descriptive nickname was "Buffalo." But Buffalo deserves a chapter to himself.

XXVIII

BAD BARGAINS

BUFFALO ADAMS was a mad collier. He was a bull-necked, sullen fellow, possessed of great physical strength. I should think he was about five-and-twenty years of age. Buffalo was an atavist.

He was our illustrious ancestor Pithecanthropus Alalus, Esquire, come back to revisit the glimpses of the moon.

He was worse than any animal. No animal has vices. Buffalo had nothing else—except appetites. He was a horrible creature, horrible to listen to, horrible to look upon.

Buffalo made a bad impression from the first. His long black hair was matted together, his skin was grimed with dirt, his great dog's teeth were brown. The new recruit stood scowling in the pay-room before Colour-sergeant Daly, a clean, smart, pleasant non-commissioned officer.

The sergeant asked him his name, his age, his trade. Then he asked:

“What is your religion?”

Buffalo bit off a chew of tobacco, looked a deadly insult at the orderly corporal and said:

“I'm a Christian.”

The colour-sergeant smiled.

“I'm glad to hear it,” he said. “You don't look like one. Corporal Bates, put this man in No. 4 Mess. And—er—give him some rotten-stone and a

long-scrubber and show him the wash-house. D'ye hear, Adams? Get the outer crust off you. This is not a black regiment." And the "Flag" arose, buttoned his tunic, hitched up his sword, spread his chest, and went swaggering off as bright as a jewel and as clean as a trout.

The next day Buffalo began his career. When Joe Slingers, commonly called "Merrylegs," asked Buffalo pleasantly to lend him his face to pound pipeclay with, Buffalo smote Joseph on the mazzard with a basin. Joe patted Buffalo on the head with a boot, and the corporal of the room came in and sent the pair of them to the guard-room.

Joe got off, but Buffalo got seven days.

The next day the drill-sergeant ran Buffalo in for laziness at recruits' drill. The day after he was run in for being drunk on parade. The colonel hinted that this was becoming monotonous, and began to drop hints about cells. Then the sergeant-major had one of his rare moments of compunction. He spoke up for Adams, and begged him off. More—he went and told the drill-sergeant to be easy with the man, and he asked the colour-sergeant of the company to keep an eye on him.

"He's a sullen fellow," said the "major," "not very bright, and he's got a rotten bad start. Give him a chance."

But Bonass never gave any human soul a chance. Bonass had Buffalo at defaulters' drill, and Bonass rattled him and cursed him over the stoniest parts of the parade, under the blazing sun, until the nether fires burned up in Buffalo's dark soul, and he saw red. Then at a word he threw his rifle at the sergeant's feet, swore a couple of poisoned oaths, and started at a run for his room. Bonass put him in the guard-room.

The next morning the sergeant-major saw Buffalo

once more between the escort, and stopped to speak to him.

"Why, man," said the "major," "what bad luck you have! What have you been doing now?"

Buffalo stepped out of the ranks with lifted fist and a snarl like a wolf, and said—— However, it was something rude he said.

Then the sergeant-major showed his temper.

"Sergeant of the guard! March the prisoner back and handcuff him." Buffalo gave a shriek, and——

When he got in front of the colonel, Private Adams spoiled the solemnity of the proceedings by smashing the orderly-room inkstand with his manacled hands, and by expressing very briefly, but very trenchantly, his opinion of the commanding officer and the regiment. The colonel gave him seven days' cells.

When Buffalo came out of cells he got straight to business. He broke out of barracks, brought in a quart of rum, drank as much as he could, and then tried to murder Private Harrison with a poker. Harrison shouted, and was heard by Sergeant Mockler and me as we passed. We ran in, and so did Johnny Bright, a big, good-humoured young recruit.

Harrison, badly hurt, was lying in the fender. Buffalo had retired into a corner with a drawn bayonet in each hand, and was giving an illuminated address to the British Army, coupled with an offer to see the blood of any sweet gentleman who ventured within his reach.

Tommy Mockler, who would have retained his sang-froid through an earthquake, turned calmly to John Bright and said: "Take those weapons from that man."

Bright looked at Buffalo's eyes and at the gleaming bayonets and at Tommy Mockler.

"Private Bright, disarm Private Adams," said Mockler.

Bright glanced despairingly round, then he had a bright idea—I beg pardon—snatching up a heavy form, he held it at the charge, and rushing upon Adams, knocked all the breath out of his body with one blow.

Buffalo was taken to the guard-room. When he had been there a while, he came to the grated window of the prisoners' room and asked to see the orderly officer. He was told to wait. About 11 p.m. the officer took the guard, and Buffalo was called to the grid to speak to him. Buffalo only wished to give the officer his opinion of the corps. The officer did not wait, and only heard Buffalo's opinion of the colonel and the senior major, but I think he heard enough. He seemed surprised.

This time the colonel was away on leave, and the junior major, after gazing at Buffalo in amazement for a minute, said to the sergeant-major:

"Haw! Sergeant-majah! Is the prisonah—haw—an Englishman?"

The "major" thought he was Welsh.

"Haw! He—he doesn't look human. Haw! Send him away. Admonished."

The sergeant-major shook his head as he left the orderly-room. He did not like the looks of Buffalo.

Buffalo went to his barrack-room and drank raw rum. Then he went on defaulters' fatigue for the day. In the evening he drank more rum. Then Evan Evans, a newly joined recruit of A Company, came into the room where Buffalo was sitting smoking and scowling.

Buffalo looked up and met the eyes of Evans. The two men stood still, staring. The other men began to wonder what was in the wind. Buffalo spoke. He said:

"You here, you black beast!"

"Ho! Jem Davids," said Evans, "who'd have thought o' seein' you?"

No other words were spoken. The two men silently pulled off their tunics, turned up their shirt-sleeves, tightened their belts, rubbed their shoes on the floor, and fell upon each other like wild beasts.

They were well matched, and they meant murder. They struck with all their great strength, and then closed. Then there was a flash of steel, and Evans had blood on his face.

The men leapt upon them and took the knife away from Buffalo, and the colour-sergeant came in and asked for an explanation.

Evans explained. With four men holding him, with his shirt ripped open to the waist, with a deep gash in his cheek, with his eyes like hot coals, and his whole body heaving in long gasps, he panted out the story.

Buffalo had deserted from a dozen regiments. Then he and Evans had met and fought in a Welsh corps. Then both had deserted, and by accident had met once more.

"You snake!" Evans panted. "You was my pal. I lent him money—he stole my watch—he tried to murder me! You wait—wait until I get free again! You stabbed me in the back! Thought I was dead! You wait——"

That was the end of Buffalo. He got five years and his discharge. Evans got forty-two days.

XXIX

OLD WAR DOGS

SOLDIERS do not like to talk of the battles they have fought in. Riley was very close. He had a scar on his left hand, and it required several pints of beer to get from him the story of that wound. At last he said glumly, "'Twas at Inkerman. In one of the rushes. A big feller made a point at me, and his bayonet slid along the barrel and got me hand. Bayonet wounds heal badly. I was some weeks in hospital with that."

"And how did you get clear of the Russian?" I asked.

Riley fidgeted and looked uncomfortable. "Inkerman," he said, "was hot stuff. It was Donnybrook: every man fighting on his own."

"Yes," I said. "Did you kill the Russian, Gabriel?"

Gabriel answered briefly, "If I hadn't, he'd have killed me."

On another occasion he told me a little about the Alma, and after an encouraging drink I got this good story.

"Our colonel, he was a daisy. We were marchin' up the hill with the shot a-flyin', marchin' in line, like we were on parade, an' a chap named Donovan, bein' eager with the fightin' blood in him, got a pace ahead of his dressin' an' the colonel spied him and calls out, 'Dress back, dress back, man; you'll spoil the whole affair.'"

Now Mick Harrington, known as "Micky Begad," was an exception to the rule. When I asked him one day if he had ever killed a man, he answered with a chuckle: "Sure, I couldn't sleep in me bed if I thought I hadn't. Ay, many a time I've fired into the brown, begad, and many a pot-shot I've took in the trenches at close quarters, begad. An' that reminds me of a queer thing that happened one day. We was in the advanced parallel, close up to the walls, and a French doctor came there and wanted to look into Sebastopol. So we told him if he did he would be shot, begad, and he would look and he did look, and begad he was shot dead.

"Well, we heard that his brother was a colonel and we carried the body to the French camp, and the colonel gave us a bottle of wine and some cake tobacco and some money, and said he: 'My poor brother was too valiant.' I thought his brother a bit of a fool, for I says to him: 'You'll be shot if you do, begad,' and begad he did and he was shot dead!"

However, there were comic interludes at Cardiff. There were, for instance, Privates Bill Ryan and Bill Dawson. Ryan, "the Beauty," while in his cups imagined that he saw a ghost. When he got back to the barracks he dug his Testament out of his cleaning bag, went down on his knees, kissed the book and said, "I will never touch another drop of liquor till me dyin' day. So help me God." When the same afternoon, Andy White blew in and asked him to come and have a drink, Ryan was troubled in spirit. "I cannot, Andy," he said ruefully. "Me oath, man; me oath." But before Andy had gone half-way to the canteen "the Beauty" was at his side. "Man," he panted, "will ye give me five minutes and I'll be wid yer?" Andy nodded and walked on. Then Ryan ran back to his room, found his Testament,

dropped on his knees, and, kissing the book, said: "So help me God I was only jokin'."

Now I will say something about my dear friend "Whisky Bill." Whisky Bill was one of those men of whom a book could be written. He was Irish, of the Kerry type—the Iberian. These men are of middle height, very swarthy, with black hair and eyes, bold, hooked, aquiline noses, heavy black brows, and long, drooping black moustaches of the Mongolian pattern. You may see hundreds of them in Kerry, all as like each other as twin brothers.

William was a mystery. Everybody liked him; everybody respected him. Yet he was gloomy, sarcastic, reserved and dissipated. He and I and my comrade Joe used to have great arguments on literature. William was a Dickens enthusiast; his criticism of Major Dobbin and Amelia in "Vanity Fair," fired into us one day when we were praising Thackeray, was scathing and polished; but not fit for publication. William had the literary instinct; he talked like a book, and like a clever book. But I don't think he had ever been a writer. He was one of those men who can do anything. He could, for instance, mend watches. And he could interest the officers in him. The officers spent a few pounds on a watch-mending outfit for William, so that he might mend watches for the men. And William went out and sold the outfit and came home blind in a cart, and did his watch-mending with a penknife, a quill pen, and a fork. He was not called "Whisky Bill" for nothing.

"The man," said William, "who does not thank his Maker for a glass of old Jameson, mixed with hot water, one lump of sugar, and the slightest suspicion of lemon, ought to be buried at a cross-road at the public expense."

William was one of the cleanest soldiers in the regiment, and one of the best—when he was sober;

and the colonel let him off time after time at orderly-room. The colonel liked him. He was a superior person.

In Cardiff William excelled himself. William's brother turned up, from Mexico, or Tibet, or one of those places which men of William's family would be likely to visit. William's brother had the family gift. They went out, the two brothers, and were not seen or heard of for three days. Then a note came to my friend Joe. It was from the brother. The brother was at an inn in Cardiff, and could not come out. He had spent all his money, and William had sold his boots.

Then next day the wreck of William appeared before the colonel. The colonel was a soldier. He stroked his white moustache, shut one eye, and looked at "Whisky Bill" with the other.

"What have you to say this time?" asked the colonel.

"Nothing, sir," said William.

"I'm ashamed of you," said the colonel. "I don't know why I did not try you by court martial last month. You'll die in a ditch. Go. Admonished."

Then William came up to his room, whistled an air from *Traviata* (he could whistle like a flute), opened his kit-bag, produced a bottle of sherry, poured the contents into a basin, and drank it like a cup of tea. . . . "Heavens!" said William. "I began to think I was a corpse. Will any soldier lend me a draw at his pipe?"

William was a hard case.

XXX

MOLL AND JOHN

ONE day in September of 1874 Jim Stocks made the drum rumble in the band-room, and some of us went in to hear the news, for it was a signal. "Just got the griffin," said James. "A and B Companies for Pembroke Dock; H and K for Popton Fort." This news was "straight from the horse's mouth" and proved correct.

H and K were disgusted. Bombardier McKenna, of the Artillery, had spent a year at Popton. He assured us that it was a lone, lorn place, "a very home of tears," or, as he expressed it, "a bastely doldrum of a hole, where nothing ever happened and nobody never turned up."

"Faith," said he, "'tis about as warrm as the middle of London Bridge and as sociable as the Galtee Mountains. When we'd been there three months we'd complexions like green curry. Bedad, you could scrape the mould off us. Man, 'tis ten miles from the nearest town, and the divvle the sign of tram or railway. Me heart is broke with thinking of it." H Company cast ashes on their heads and cursed their day.

But what a profundity of wisdom is enshrined in the axiom: "One never knows!" As we trudged along the ten-mile stretch of bleak road that led to the fort, how little did we imagine we were marching into halcyon days. And yet it was so.

Popton Fort is one of the now obsolete defences of Milford Haven. The bombardier was so far right that the place was bare and windy, and that there was no village, not even a street or row of cottages, within ten miles on the land side.

The only habitations were a few scattered farms far apart from each other. There was a lonely old church a mile away, where a purple-faced parson preached, to a congregation of less than twenty sinners, sermons which were neither audible nor comprehensible.

There was not even a shop or an inn. Contractors brought the rations across the Haven from Milford every morning in a boat. That is to say, when the sea was not rough. When the sea was too rough, salt beef and biscuits were served from the stores. Private Pearce, the canteen waiter, had the keys of the stores; but I anticipate.

In the Army everything goes by routine. Coals and candles are not served out till September 15. If the weather is warm, so! You get your coal to date. If a blizzard rages from September 1 to 14 you grin and bear it. No coal till the 15th.

We arrived at Popton about a week before coal time, and the sea air was very cold and searching. But the men of H Company had initiative. The barrack-rooms stood in a row and at one end of the row was the coal-yard. The rooms were casemated, each having a trap-door in the roof, through which shells could be hoisted for the guns on the battery above.

The trap-doors were not fastened. And there must have been a hundred tons of coal in the coal-yard. When we marched in we could not find a pinch of coal dust in the big iron boxes. When we sergeants came over from the mess an hour later every room had a roaring fire in it.

Most extraordinary thing! We could not understand it! The colour-sergeant could not understand it! On the following morning the orderly officer could not understand it! "Colour-sergeant," he said, "how is it the men have got fires?" And the "Flag" looked respectfully wooden and answered: "Probably some coal left by the last detachment, sir." And the officer said: "I see," but he was mistaken; he did not see at all. Perhaps he did not want to see.

As I said, Private Pearce kept the keys of the store. We youngsters were very hungry and Pearce was very thirsty. We would arrange to meet him casually during the lean blank between breakfast and dinner and would say: "Think the boat will get over to-day, Don?" and he would answer cryptically, "That depends." Then one of us would say: "True. Have a drink?" Well, well. They were good biscuits, with as few weevils in them as one could expect.

But very soon we ceased to stand Donald drinks. We found that we had come to sojourn in a land flowing with milk and honey. We got as many blackberries and mushrooms and as much watercress and shell-fish as we could eat. We went out in the boat and caught fish by the barrow-load.

While I was mess caterer I used at night to put a shilling on the outside sill of the mess window, and next morning I found two brace of rabbits there. As the shilling was gone and the rabbits were dead I concluded they had swallowed the shilling and choked themselves.

To be sure, as Jack Rochfort pointed out, they could not all have swallowed one shilling. And as Jack was a Wakefield man and had once been a poacher he was probably right. They were nice rabbits. And there was a field of turnips close to

the fort. Quite handy. Yes. We did ourselves exceeding well.

McKenna was wrong about the social possibilities of the place. I think his battery must have lacked enterprise. Were there not farms? And do not farmers have daughters? There were some sweetly pretty girls in church on Sundays, and the Ramchunders were, in short, Ramchunders.

Popton, indeed, was an A1 ideal station. All my recollections of our time there are of pleasures, amusements, and adventures. I suppose we did some drill sometimes, but I do not remember it. We fished, and played cricket, and swam, and sang and danced and made friends with the girls. Yes. It soon became evident that as regards the erubescient fair the detachment had divagated into purple patches.

Joe began it. Joe and Fred and I were cronies. The three Fusiliers. Joe had a way with him. "Wherever you meet Sergeant Norris," one of the men's wives said to me, "he has a pleasant word and a pleasant smile for you. Sure, no woman could help smiling back at him. 'Tis the big wonder no girl has married him."

Yes, Joe had a winning smile, and a merry tongue and a disarmingly ingenuous manner. And he was not exclusive. I can say that for him. He annexed two of the best girls before any of the other boys had scored a glad eye.

Fred and I were engaged and had to think of the girls we left behind us. But the gamekeeper's daughter was a beauty and Fred was very good-looking. Fred and the gamekeeper's daughter walked on rosy clouds throughout the winter, but in the spring Fred was appointed to the Staff at the Aldershot Gym. and had to go. The night before he left he got my promise to see the girl, tell her about his

engagement and beg her pardon. I said, "Certainly, old fellow." I always was a silly ass.

A day or two later I was playing cricket when I saw the forsaken one come along the garden path of the master-gunner's cottage and stand at the gate. I took my courage in both hands and went to her. She was a girl of eighteen, arrestingly pretty, and she stood and looked at me across the gate with her wonderful hazel eyes while I blushed and fidgeted and stammered over my unwelcome recital and apology. And while I was floundering and nearly sick with shame, she gave me a sudden smile and said brightly: "Never mind that Frederick. What about you?"

I have blamed myself a hundred times since for the innocent flirtation which followed, but, after all, it was, as the Americans say, "up to me."

We stood at the gate and "changed eyes," as Shakespeare has it, and then we wandered out into the fields.

I don't think Nellie was in love with Fred, nor with me. I think she was in love with love. At any rate, she very frankly and prettily made love to me. I had never been made love to before, and I liked it at least as well as a wiggling from the sergeant-major.

She would lead me to some secluded spot among the rocks and, having seated herself on a boulder, would say: "Kneel down on the sand in front of me so that I can look at your pretty countenance." That is how she quaintly phrased it. And she would sit and gaze at me for an hour, as if I had been a rare specimen of old blue china. And ever and anon she would heave a musky sigh and murmur softly, "Those pretty eyes."

She was a dear, and if the man she married had any nous he must have come in for a glorious time.

But he did not enjoy it long, for she died young, poor soul.

All bright eyes are alluring to the young, especially "the bright eyes of danger." We three harum-scarums loved nothing better than to go out in the boat when the Haven was unsafe for small craft. Joe had done a little sailing and knew about boats. He acted as captain.

One day we came very near to shipwreck. We had gone across to Milford and the boatmen had protested against our return. They said we should never make land. But Joe understudied the skipper of the *Hesperus*, who, as you may remember, "blew a whiff from his pipe and a scornful laugh laughed he." And we went.

I steered, Joe worked the sail, and Fred sat in the bows and sang—loud. It blew hard and the seas were turbulent. Out in mid-channel Joe told me to luff, or perform some nautical mystery, and I pulled the tiller the wrong way and got the boat into some position to which Joe objected. "Pull your other hand, pull like blazes," he shouted, and I pulled.

Then Fred spoke. He said: "This serves me right for putting to sea with a pair of copper-faced, addle-headed, incurable lunatics. If this boat turns turtle, I shall be drowned in the flower of my youth, for how the devil could one swim in this hell broth, and us in overcoats and belts and swords? Put back to Milford, you brace of twopenny pirates, or brave an orphan's curse."

To this Joe made suitable reply. Then he took in the sail, went to the helm, pushed an oar at me and an oar at Fred, and said in his jolly, friendly way: "Now, pull, you gifted couple of land-lubbers, and pull hard and be damned to you."

We landed at Bullwell Bay, a mile out of our course, and had to tramp home in the dark. And as we were

pushing through the rain I, with a ham on my shoulder, suddenly found myself in space. I thought I had gone over the cliff. It gave me quite a turn. But I fell only about six feet into another field. The ham was no worse.

And then we used to break out of barracks. Just for fun, and to pass an hour with the girls. And to get out of the fort we had to crawl on our hands and knees in the dark along the top of an escarpment for a distance of a hundred yards. The path bent in a half-moon curve, and was not more than half a yard wide, and on one hand was a sixty-foot moat and on the other a steep land-fall with rocks and the sea at the bottom. But we were young and we enjoyed it.

Nowadays I prefer the fireside, a pipe, and someone playing Bach on the Broadwood. Still, what would you? My daughter could not play for me then. I had no daughter and no piano, and one must be amused.

Oh yes! maugre the bombardier, we enjoyed ourselves in the "bastely doldrum of a hole," for laughter and kisses come easily to the young. But it lasted only a year, that jolly time, and then we had to sing, "Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye." Well, Joe had to sing in the plural, for he had two girls. And when he bade farewell to Eliza she gave him a hot pork pie and he buttoned it up inside his tunic and went to see his other girl, and the other girl kissed him and wept and threw her arms around him and hugged him, and—broke the pie.

"Damn that pork pie," said Joe, laughing, as he told me. "I could feel the hot gravy running down my chest. And she wouldn't leave go. I'll swear I've got a blister as big as a penny muffin."

When we landed at Plymouth the band of the Royal Marines came to play us in. And they played

“Come all Ye Faithful.” We felt it was sweetly appropriate.

I once heard a crusty old fellow who was scowling at a leave train full of sailors say: “Look at them! Drunk at eleven o’clock in the morning. And on their country’s money!”

We had a good time at Popton on our country’s money. But our country has got even with us since. I have had to stand treat, with the kind assistance of the tax collector, many a time since then. And I hope our soldier boys got their share of it.

XXXI

THE PLEASURES OF THE CHASE

SERGEANT CHARLES was not of ours. He was a wild Scotsman, and he belonged to a light infantry regiment.

Charles was a well-groomed, highly educated man, very proud of his appearance, of his white hands, of his public-school accent, and of his marvellous command of Rabelaisian language.

I met him first at dinner in the sergeants' mess, where he was our guest. I was charmed with his refined manners and his bright and witty talk, and began to flatter myself that I had found a pearl. Then he turned to me with a smile and asked me if I was fond of Indian curry. I said I was, and then, with the same pleasant smile and in the same cultured voice, my nice new friend uttered a witticism so obscene that I wonder it did not turn the beef putrid. I was stunned. I made no answer. I got up and left the table.

The next day Charles came to me smiling and affable, apologized very gracefully, and asked with a slight suspicion of irony if I thought there was any serious harm in a little Rabelaisian frankness. But I also had a playful humour of the Shadbolt kind, and I replied politely that guano was a quite innocent and admirable thing, but not on the breakfast-table.

However, Charles was more careful, at least with one or two of us, and we did not quarrel. Then

one day he came and asked me to go with him to a concert in Plymouth, at which Christine Nilsson was singing, and I went. As we were leaving barracks we met a very quiet, steady sergeant of Charles's regiment. This sergeant drew me aside on some pretext and asked me if I was going out with Charles. I told him yes—to a concert. Then he asked me a strange question: "Are you a good runner?" I said I was rather fast for a few hundred yards, and asked why he put such a question; but he only said: "Oh, that's all right, then; see you to-morrow," and left us. He knew Charles. We went to the concert and left about ten. Charles was in great form, and chatted to me about music and musicians, and painters and pictures, and colour and form and poetry, and at last, as he was quoting some lines from *Alastor*, there came round the corner a policeman.

We walked on until we met the policeman, when Charles stopped and inquired most politely the way to some square, which existed only in his own imagination.

"Don't know any such square as that, not in Plymouth," said the constable.

"Then," said Charles, "allow me to suggest to you, my dear friend, that you are an obfuscated idiot;" and with that he suddenly bashed the policeman's helmet over his eyes, gave him a heavy punch in the chest, and ran.

This was one of Charles's favourite jokes. It seemed a good deal funnier the day after. Even then it was funnier to him than to the person who had acted second.

Soon after that adventure Charles got into trouble and was placed under arrest. Thinking he would be rather worried I went round to see him and found him dancing the sword dance on the barrack-room table.

THE PLEASURES OF THE CHASE

Now it is a curious thing, but I remember no more of Charles. I see him now, flushed and hilarious, dancing on a barrack-room table, as I saw him then. Whether he was or not reduced, and what became of him later, I do not know.

He was a type of sergeant not so common as one would expect. He was clever and amusing, and could be very agreeable when in the mood. But he was quite unfit for his position, and behind his wit and affability there was, I'm afraid, a rather repulsive and unprincipled nature.

XXXII

DISCHARGE

TEMPLEMORE, our next station, meant to me the rifle range and Spike Island. I loved the shooting, but I did not love Spike. It was a convict prison and a grim, grey place in those wintry months, and the sight of the convict gangs and the knowledge of their punishment and their crimes were most depressing. Still, there were streaks of humour even in that uncongenial house of dolour.

There was a captain of a line regiment who sometimes mounted guard there who was very pleasing. He was a very big man, so tall and so broad in the beam that he used to fill up the guard-room doorway.

Now, Spike was a gloomy place, and the time must have hung heavily upon the hands of an officer, cooped up by himself in a little guard-room: and I believe this big captain used to be most horribly bored. At any rate, his device for killing time was peculiar. One night when I happened to be sergeant of the guard I noticed some queer movements of the light in the officers' guard-room, and, thinking something must be wrong, I stepped across and looked into the window.

The big captain was sitting on the back of a chair with his feet on the seat. In each hand he held a candlestick with a candle in it. One candle was lit, the other was not. The captain, with a face of the profoundest gravity, lighted one candle at the other,

DISCHARGE

then blew out the candle he got the light from. After a pause of half a minute he relighted the candle he had blown out, and blew out the other. I thought at first the poor gentleman must have gone mad; but I soon guessed that he was simply bored. How long he played at this curious game I cannot say, but he went on for a long time, for when I came out to change the sentries he was still at it.

This same captain used to send for a bottle of whisky every time he mounted guard, and as he suspected, not without reason, that the soldier told off to attend upon the officer of the guard loved whisky better than honesty, he set a little trap for him.

Having carefully finished the whisky overnight, he poured some stale beer into the bottle, corked it up, and put it on the table.

In the morning when Pat came to clean the boots the captain snored profoundly. Pat moved about watching the captain, then went up to the cot and touched him; the captain snored on. Then Pat got the bottle, drew out the cork, glanced at the captain, and took a drink. Just as he drank, the captain sat up in bed and roared out a tremendous "Haw, haw, haw!" while Pat, convinced that he was poisoned, ran out of the guard-room and made for the water-tap. The captain never alluded to the incident, nor did Pat.

In the spring of 1877 we left Spike for Headquarters and in June I was transferred to the Reserve. In a new suit of civilian clothes and with a few (a very few) pounds in my pocket I went back to England in the hope of earning a living and getting married. And I got a living and got married in three years, though how I did it I cannot after all this time imagine.

XXXIII

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

MY second walking tour was six years later than the first. Yet my recollections of it are less distinct. For one thing, I have quite forgotten the distances between the towns, and I have no map handy to assist me. But that matters very little.

When I came out of the Army in 1877, I found my mother was away from home nursing a friend, and my sweetheart had gone to North Wales for a holiday. I stayed in the house alone, doing my own cooking and cleaning, and filling up the blanks by writing applications for various jobs. I think I "stuck it" for about three weeks, and then I made a sudden resolution to go and look for a job, and to look for it in Wales.

I set off next morning. Like Walt Whitman, "afoot and lighthearted" I took to the open road. My idea was to walk to Caerwys, but having negotiated the thirty-two miles to Manchester my desire overbore my patience, and I finished the journey by rail, arriving at Caerwys about ten o'clock at night.

It was a beautiful starry night in summer and the air was sweet with the delicious perfume of the evening-scented stock. The smell of that flower always brings back to me that happy time, and the village gardens, and the glittering constellations, and a small blue ribbon bow on a dressing-table:

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

Each morn a thousand roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the rose of yesterday?

As I was not expected, and had no address beyond the name of my little friend's host, I paused at a garden gate at which three dark-eyed, black-haired, pretty Welsh maids were whispering and giggling, and asked for "Mr. Jones." The mischievous kittens answered me volubly and gaily—in Welsh.

As I only knew two or three Welsh words and could not pronounce those, I responded with courteous eloquence in Cockney "back-slang." We had a delightful conversation, which we all enjoyed, and then, after some pleasant laughter, the young ladies directed me in English to a cottage but a few score yards away, where someone I was very glad to see was very glad to see me.

That was a happier night than the first of my previous walking tour; but if we dance we expect to pay the piper. Next morning I set out to walk to Llanfyllin.

It rained, and the peasants I met on the roads could speak only Welsh, and I could get no tobacco but black shag, which my soul abominated and my stomach loathed, and it rained. Heavens, how it rained! And when I asked for Llanfyllin of a man with a wagon he clucked in his throat and rumbled in his chest, and made wild passes in the air with his arms, like Merlin working a spell.

So I showed him the word on a map and he regarded me reproachfully, and uttered a word which sounded like Hlan-Hoothlin! So that I marvelled that he had a tooth in his head. Finally he put his finger on a word spelt Llandrillo, which he pronounced—but no, he did not pronounce it; he just barked at me, and as he barked he pointed along the road, and so we parted.

I reached Llandrillo just before dusk, wet to the

skin, and finding a small inn, entered and asked for some hot tea. When I had drunk the tea I asked the landlady the way to Llanfyllin. She did not answer me, but spoke in Welsh to a number of men who sat smoking round the fire.

The men replied in Welsh, and the landlady, turning to me, said in English that I must not attempt to go to Llanfyllin in the dark, adding that it was a bad night and a long way. But I wanted to get on, and I told her that I was already wet through and that I could easily walk the distance before dawn. She shook her head and there was more conversation in Welsh. Then she told me that it would not be safe for me to attempt that journey in the dark.

"These men," she said, "are all shepherds, and know every rood of the mountains, but not a man of them would walk to Llanfyllin in the night." Well, I was young and rash, and said I meant to try it, whereupon the landlady snapped a few coruscating consonants at the shepherds, and two big fellows got up and stood with their backs against the door. The landlady explained. She said the men refused to let me go to certain death, and she added, "Go, young man, to bed now, and I will have your clothes dried and send you up some hot supper."

"Bless the women," I said to myself as I climbed the stairs, "they always mother me."

I went out early next morning and started along a mountain path which was rapidly becoming a brook. It rained. I trudged on for seven miles, and then came round a sharp bend and saw the inn I set out from. I had walked round the hill, and while I was casting about for another path a bull caught sight of me, did not like the shape of my nose, and started in to improve it. I sprinted merrily, and coming to a deep cutting scrambled down one side and up the

other. There we stood for a minute, the bull and I, one each side the cutting. I threw stones at the bull and the bull swore at me in the dead languages. And it rained.

Now it transpired that the bull had driven me into the right road, and in due course I discovered the reason why I had been detained against my will the night before; and as I walked warily along that narrow, curling pass, with a cliff a mile high on one side and a precipice ten miles deep on the other, it was borne in upon me that had it not been for the motherly woman there would have been one fool less in the world the previous night.

By the way, I will not vouch for the measurements given above. They are only approximate. The cliff might not have been quite a mile high nor the precipice quite ten miles deep. As I said just now, I do not remember the distances accurately in that second tour. Besides, it rained, so that arriving at Llanfyllin about six in the evening and feeling, as it were, wet to the bones, I found an inn, had some hot tea and went to bed.

And as I undressed I reflected that I had not kissed the chambermaid. Such an omission would have been impossible had I been in uniform. Comforting myself with the thought that I could rectify the oversight in the morning I sought my pillow and slept the sleep of a good little child till the cocks crew.

When I got down to breakfast the maid was not to be seen. Instead I found straddled before the fire a stout, bald person in clerical garb, whose face, as the poet says, was "like the red, red rose that's newly born in June," and whose nose resembled a very large and very ripe Victoria plum. This gentleman, in a deep, fruity voice, entertained me with conversation.

Having asked my name and business and having been told politely that I was Mr. John Smith, and was seeking an appointment as editor of a newspaper or manager of a dye-works, he confided in me his belief that the world was a very wicked place, and that London was an abominable city with which no educated gentleman would care to soil his boots.

He and a friend, he told me, had recently been in London on business, and having no money with them except a cheque had been refused a meal in a West End restaurant. "Ah! when I offered my card and my cheque, which was for a considerable amount, ah! the waiter had the effrontery to say that he had, ah! heard that story before."

At the recollection of his wrongs the vicar became angry and at last exclaimed, "Would you believe it, sir? In the nineteenth century, in the, ah! heart of London. The, ah! metropolis of the world. Two gentlemen. Ah! Gentlemen. Hungry. Wanted a mutton chop. Had not the money to pay for it. Ah! Could not get it."

I expressed the deepest sympathy with the, ah! gentleman, and added, for his consolation, that the same thing had happened to me, at which he swelled his crimson gills and ejaculated, "Ah! You don't say so, sir! De-ah me! Is that so? This, sir, is indeed an anarchical and infidel age. Yet I shall contend that only in London, that Babylonish sink of all unkindness, would such a scandal be tolerated."

After that I had my breakfast, atoned to the maid for my overnight neglect, and went out to see if I could get a job on the railway. "If I don't get a job soon," I reflected, "I know another gentleman who will be unable to negotiate a mutton chop on his face."

When I returned, unsuccessful, to the inn the vicar was asleep on a settle in the kitchen. Beside

him was a small girl child. When she saw me she pointed her wee, curled finger and said, "Uncle's dunk."

As I walked along towards Rhayader, enjoying a spell of watery sunshine between showers, I overtook a travelling native of that "Babylonish sink of all unkindness," who fell into step beside me and began to speak of men and things.

"Can you tell me, guvnor," he inquired, "why they call this blighted kentry the Principality?"

"Well," I said, "I suppose——"

But he went on: "Because, if you arst me, it ain't got no business on the map. It ain't a kentry. It's a blinkin' upheaval. There ain't no towns in it, only 'en runs and ranters' chapels an' sheep-folds. Why, gorlumme, guvnor, I ain't 'ad a square meal since I kem outer Long Acre; an' as fer a job o' work, if yer arsk for a chance the blighters make faces at yer. Ain't you found it so yourself, guvnor?"

I tried to persuade him that there were some real towns in Wales, and that a considerable percentage of the population had given up talking with the back of their necks, but the little London gentleman would have none of it, and announced his resolve to return to the Walworth Road as soon as he could make up the price of a ticket to St. Pancras.

I hope he had his wish. A city sparrow's place is the city. He and I parted company at Rhayader, where I found a letter offering me work in Cheshire at a guinea a week. An offer which I promptly accepted. I may add that I reached the town of my employment with one shilling and sixpence in my pocket. And the first piece of good fortune I struck was a nice woman.

With eighteenpence in cash and no luggage, one is not enthusiastically welcomed in the best hotels. I got into the town at 10 p.m., and went into a little

fruit-shop to inquire for lodgings. In the shop was a plump, kind-faced woman of about forty. She stood behind the counter with her hands on her hips, looked at me in the amused way I was so familiar with, cross-examined me deftly, and having gone through me as easily and dexterously as an Artful Dodger would have gone through my pockets, gave me the friendly smile I knew so well, told me to stay at her house for the night, and in the morning her husband would get me regular lodgings with her sister.

So ended my second walking tour and my last tramp. There is a very good little poem of Gerald Gould's, one verse of which runs as follows:

I know not where the white road runs, not what the blue hills are,
 But a man can have the sun for friend and for his guide a star;
 And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice is heard,
 For the river calls and the road calls, and oh! the call of a bird!

Ah! I like the white road and the sun and the stars and the birds, but——

Once, years ago, a Labour leader and I were coming from a big meeting in Edinburgh. We were walking quickly towards our very comfortable hotel. It was past ten, there was a bitter wind, the cold rain was falling thickly. And I said to my companion: "Edward, we are not going to supper and bed in the Grand Hotel. We have not thick overcoats and good boots. We are out of work. We have tramped thirty-five miles. We are hungry and weary; our feet are wet, we have no money. Where are we going to sleep?"

And my friend shuddered. "Do be quiet," he said; "what a horrible imagination you have."

Perhaps he was right. At any rate, I thought I would be on the safe side, so I have called them "Walking Tours."

XXXIV

CHESTER CASTLE

BUT I had not done with the Army yet. Tim Doyle's bugbears, the "Rooshians," had begun to be "the full of our eye," and after some months' quiet service as a time-keeper on the Weaver I was called up with the Reserves and joined the 96th Regiment, the Manchesters, at Chester Castle. I was there a few months only when Lord Beaconsfield secured us "peace with honour," and I went back to my quiet life in Northwich. Nothing exciting happened during my service at Chester. I spent my leisure time learning English grammar, with the valuable assistance of William Cobbett, with whom I have since been so often compared as a writer. I also won £5 and the Gold Guns and Crown as the best shot in the regiment.

The monotony of this, my last spell of service, was broken by an adventure. I was sergeant of the Hospital Guard and went to change the sentry on the hospital gate at twelve midnight. As the two sentries stood at the port I noticed something like a white bundle in the sentry box and asked the sentry what it was. He answered, "It's a girl, Sergeant." A girl. He explained that she was a young girl who had come to Chester looking for work, had spent all her money and had been attacked by some girls in the street. Hearing the screams he opened the gate and rescued her. "I thought there'd be no harm in

keeping her here, Sergeant, till them women cleared off," he said. No harm!

Now I was a perfect whale for duty, sometimes, as the fall of the Black M.P.s will testify. But sometimes I was considerably otherwise. My duty was to turn the girl adrift and make a prisoner of the sentry. But the sentry was a mere boy and the girl a mere child. I changed the sentries and took the girl to the guard-house, where I gave her some bread and coffee and a blanket and locked her up in a cell till morning.

She told me her story and gave me the address of an aunt who had brought her up. She was an orphan and her age was sixteen. She seemed a nice simple child and she was terrified. I gave her some money and wrote for her aunt. The aunt came, a white-haired decent old Welsh peasant, and I handed the girl over. Next day as I was taking the train for Wimbledon I met the reunited couple on the railway platform, when the old lady thanked me and—offered me sixpence. And I think the offering of that sixpence told more about that ingenuous and unsophisticated old villager than I could put into a page of analysis. I may add that a year or two later my old friend Joe Norris, who was interested in the story, wrote to the aunt and got the pleasant news that the girl had settled down and was doing well. But suppose I had been a pukka soldier and had done my duty! My dear old comrade, Sergeant Bonass, would have done his duty joyfully and that poor child's life would most probably have been blasted.

When the Reserves were called up in '78 they responded promptly. We of the Manchesters were very proud, because of the hundreds ordered to Chester only one man failed to appear. This one was James Bryan, and we spoke of him without enthusiasm as a waster who had let us down and

spoilt our record. And then, three weeks behind his time, he came. In the middle of the night there was a noise in our room and we woke up one by one. Then in the darkness I heard a strange voice shouting: "Hello! 96th. Rouse about, men! Here's your old Jim Bryan. Here's Jim Bryan of the Borderers back from Texas, bless your souls! Why don't you fall in the company? Hi! Hello! Here's Jim Bryan of the First Class Reserve all the way from Texas, and gaspin' for a drink!"

Then we woke up and cheered Jim Bryan of the Borderers, who had come all the way from Texas, and made our record complete. I struck a match and inspected James. He was a big man in a pea-jacket and sailor's cloth trousers, low top-boots, and wideawake hat. I shook hands with him, and, as the match went out, and as I fell asleep, I heard him saying: "Bully for you, Sergeant. I've had the devil's own journey! And the canteen's closed; and, oh, my sainted Aunt Martha, couldn't I make a wreck of a pint of ale!"

XXXV

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

MARRIAGE is a splendid but perilous adventure upon which green youth enters with a light heart, for the future is shrouded in a rosy glamour. Never did bridegroom enter that insecure El Dorado with a more unquestioning hope than mine. Was I not marrying Sally, and had we not been sweethearts for seven years? Well: we pulled through, and now in my declining years I can repeat with thankful confidence that wise stanza of the old Arab poet:

Run! follow, follow happiness, the maid
Whose laughter is the laughing waterfall;
Run! call to her—but if no maiden call,
'Tis something to have loved the flying shade.

We were married at Sion Chapel, Halifax, on the 1st of May, 1880. I was very proud and very calm, and my bride was rather nervous and very sweet, and my father-in-law shed tears as he knelt with us at the altar; and my sister-in-law was agitated because the cabman who came to take us to the station brought a black horse, which she made him change for a grey; and the railway porters grinned when they handled our luggage, though what the devil they were amused about I could not see; and we reached our new house in Northwich early in the afternoon, and I gave my wife a golden sovereign, which, with two half-crowns her mother had bestowed on her for

a dowry, was all our worldly wealth; and we sat down together and had tea, at our table and in our house; and we smiled at each other and it seemed to both of us exceeding good.

“My wife!”—what a thrill those words give a man the first time he utters them. And how strange and wonderful and delicious it was to hear my dear girl addressed as “Mrs. Blatchford!” Those who have made love marriages will understand, and those who have not are to be pitied.

Our wedding was on Saturday, and on Monday I went back to my work on the River Weaver, where I was earning a whole thirty shillings a week. And so began a new experience, a new education and a new life. I had vowed to marry Sarah Crossley. I had married her, and now I set myself down to the task of making “Mrs. Blatchford” happy.

My young wife had gone out to work from the day she left school and she knew very little about house-keeping or cooking; but she was a born worker and as sharp as a thorn, and she soon learnt. She was a good deal of a child too, a wilful child of quick temper and strong will, a child full of character and withal merry, ingenuous and lovable. Like her excellent father she had a passion for clocks. Also she was house-proud to a fault, and she loved china and old furniture and antiques and relished apples and oranges like a four-year-old. Many an hour in those early years she spent in the market, looking on at the auction sales of cheap pottery and sometimes succumbing to temptation and buying weird jugs or plates, which she would conceal at home, fearing I should scold her. Wifely fear! That did not last long. Apples, too, proved her a true daughter of Eve, for many a time after buying apples for a pie she has eaten half the fruit before she got home. Little trifling vexations came occasionally puffing across her

domestic canvas, as when she put the mutton in the coal-shed to keep cool and the cats got it, and I remember that the first time she had to cook a chicken she cried. The darling! Being blessed with more sense than David Copperfield, I went out and bribed an old wife to give her a lesson. We were very happy and then, but a few weeks after our marriage, we nearly ran on the rocks.

She would do it, the dear. She would scrub and clean and slosh about with buckets; dolly-mopping I called it, and one evening I came home and found her nearly fainting in a chair. The floor a puddle and her clothes sopping wet to the knees. I carried her up to bed, asked a neighbour to sit with her and fetched a doctor. It was inflammation of the kidneys and kept her in her room for several weeks. I had to go to work and could not attend to her until evening, so we sent for "our Lizabeth," her sister, who came and nursed her. Always when we were in a tight place we sent for "our Lizabeth," and she never failed us. So after much anxiety the little wife made good and I lectured her about her intemperate indulgence in soap and water. Oh yes, I spake winged words. That was in 1880. Now in 1918 I came in out of the garden and found my wife, who was not at all well, down on her knees scrubbing a stone floor. I said: "Old girl, you really must not do that. You are not fit to do it." And she looked up, smiled, brushed her hair off her brow and said: "I know, but I love it." As I said, she was a wilful child.

I found married life as delectable as I had hoped and more also. I was proud of my pretty wife and took pleasure in polishing fenders, cleaning boots, chopping wood and other husbandly chores, and we moved into a better house, near to my work, and we sang together and went for delightful country walks

and, in fact, fled the time carelessly as they did in the Golden Age. And later responsibility knocked at the door and brought us a daughter. Blest for ever will be the stork which brought me such a prize. But love means care and I began to feel that marriage was not a mere merry morris dance or game of kiss-in-the-ring; but that Bacon was right about giving hostages to fortune.

In the beginning I was nearly frightened into a green sickness. If you are not a father, gentle reader, get Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story, "The Curse of Eve," and ponder it well. My wife had to go through the agony of what is called a "bad time." It seemed to me that night of terror would never end, and when the doctor came to the head of the stairs and called out, in his thick jovial voice: "A fine daughter, Mr. Blatchford," I emulated Little Billee and "used my pocket handkerchee." And when I went, very white and shaken, to see my wife, she smiled and I must quote Sir Arthur. When the terrified father creeps to the bedside and says: "Thank God it is over, Lucy, it was dreadful," the wife answers: "But I'm ever so happy now. I never was as happy in my life." How very like a husband, and how very like a wife.

But our trial was not ended when our young lady arrived. Our amateur nurse deserted us. She was a lusty drinker and the baby wasn't. That meant milk trouble, which meant for me new fears. Three times a day I had to massage my wife with oil and brandy until the strained flesh was soft and ductile. And of course we had to send for "our Lizabeth" to come and attend to her new niece. I began to realize that there were thorns as well as roses in the garden of my delight.

Did I say she was a wonderful baby? The way she used to laugh, the cleverness with which she

rode on my knee, the quickness with which she learnt to speak, her beautiful little fingers and toes—but there, no doubt some of my readers have seen babies almost as perfect and marvellous. I hope they have all grown up, those others, into daughters as excellent and sufficing.

The first time “Mrs. Blatchford” walked out with her daughter she could in the matter of porte and carriage have given points to the “Lass with the delicate air.” Pride? Triumph? Well, why not? Is a miracle less miraculous because it is not the first? When we set up housekeeping there were two of us and we only wanted each other. Now there were three of us. We had been blessed with a new being, a new soul, and we no longer wished to have our home to our two selves. We called the little stranger Winifrid and one of us began to feel that his nose was just the least thing out of joint. I have a man’s allowance of nose; but it did not hurt. I sat down to play second fiddle with a good grace and a thankful heart. Besides, she was a remarkable baby, with all the latest improvements. Such lovely wrists and ankles. And the way she took notice! Yes, my wife was proud of her toy daughter, as proud as I was of “my wife.”

When I left the Army I began to lay plans for some kind of career. Thirty shillings a week was not enough for a married man. Now I was pulled two ways. I had always wanted to be an artist; but in a place like Northwich there were no means of learning, even if I could have paid the fees. Art being out of the question I resolved to go in for press work, and to that end began to study grammar and shorthand. Grammar, thanks to William Cobbett, I mastered in my spare time while I was serving in the Reserves. Shorthand I worked at for some years. It never was any practical use to me, but the study

was. Meaning to acquire a correct shorthand style I began to write out Webster's Dictionary in shorthand and correct it with the Shorthand Dictionary. This, no doubt, enlarged my vocabulary. But, as I subsequently pruned and weeded my vocabulary, perhaps the gain was not very great.

While I was engaged in this drudgery I read steadily. One book especially, given to me by a sergeant of ours, had a strong influence on me. This was Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship." I read that over and over and then bought a cheap copy of "Sartor Resartus." I remember one evening, after reading the famous meditation on the sleeping city, I threw the book across the room. I felt I should never be able to write like that. Speaking of the incident to one of the Weaver foremen, he told me of an amateur violinist who heard Sarasate play and then went home and burnt his fiddle. I did not burn my pen, but plugged away. I wrote a story for a paper called *The Yorkshireman*, for which I was paid half a guinea. I wrote another, for which the paper forgot to pay me at all. As I was out for money and not for fame I abandoned fiction and went on with my studies.

And then my friend Norris introduced me to young Mr. Thompson in Manchester, and when Mr. Thompson married I did his work, as echoist on the *Sporting Chronicle* for a few days and thought very little about it, though, as subsequently appeared, it was a matter of importance to me.

It happened like this: I had got some work on another Yorkshire paper, *Toby*, for which I wrote paragraphs and was paid one guinea for about four thousand words. I had to do the work on Sundays, my only clear day, and the money was more than welcome. And then Mr. Hulton, one of the proprietors of the *Sporting Chronicle*, bought *Bell's Life*

MY EIGHTY YEARS

and turned it into a penny daily paper. He wanted someone to write a column of Échoes (notes on news) for *Bell's Life* and Thompson recommended me. I went to Manchester, saw Mr. Hulton and was engaged at a salary of £4 a week. So I entered journalism and by the most propitious door. This was in March, 1885. I had then a daughter aged three and a son a few months old.

XXXVI

THE FOURTH ESTATE

THE 24th of March, 1885, brought one of the most important changes, perhaps the most important, in my life, for on that day I became a journalist. My welcome was not cordial. Mr. Hulton had instructed me to call at *Bell's Life* office, report to the editor and explain the nature of my engagement. I was extremely nervous. I had no letter of introduction, and I walked up and down Bouverie Street for half an hour before I could screw my courage to the sticking place. But at last I found myself in the sacred presence.

The editor was a big burly man, with white hair. He stared at me with his cold grey eyes and did not seem favourably impressed. When I had spoken my piece he said, with a smile of contemptuous amusement: "Really, Mr.—er—Blackford, this is the first I've heard of you, and *Bell's Life* is not in need of the assistance you suggest."

At that all my nervousness fell from me. This was up my street. This was battle. As my friend Billy Batts, of the 6th West York Militia, said: "It's a poor blinkin' dog as won't fight for his blinkin' bone." I had worked for years for this opening and here was a churlish pedant who expected to drive me into the street as easily as one might chase a hen out of a garden. I had left a little wife and two little children in Cheshire and I felt like the war horse in

Job. I smiled on the editor; I beamed on him, and I said, very softly: "Mr. Hulton has given you no orders. He does not think much of editors and prefers to manage his papers himself. I will ask him to send you instructions." At this the great man's neck went red, and before he could speak the door opened and in walked Mr. Hulton, to whom I said: "Good morning, sir. The editor does not seem to understand my position here." Mr. Hulton pushed his hat back on his head, bored two holes in the fat man with his keen dark eyes and said: "This is Mr. Blatchford. He will write a column of Echoes of the Day, like those in the *Sporting Chronicle*. Give him all the assistance you can. We know his value." And the editor said: "Very good, sir," looking as if he thought it very bad, and Mr. Hulton took me out to lunch.

The editor had lost the first round and he proceeded to make a series of mistakes. He was a typical London editor of the Victorian period. He thought London was the hub of the universe and the Press the brain of London. Outside London there were places he spoke of as the provinces, and a provincial Press which did not count in the grand scheme of things. As I was a provincial and a novice he took me for a rabbit, whereas I happened to be a joyous and greedy fighter. And he did not realize that Mr. Hulton, being a Manchester man, had the same contempt for Cockneys that Londoners had for provincials. These errors led to the editor's undoing.

My agreement was to do one column of notes on news each day; but the editor sent me out on various commissions, theatres, picture shows and cricket matches in the hope that I should reveal my incompetence. Now any intelligent adult, who could write English, might have discharged those simple duties

successfully. My mother was an actress and my childhood was spent in the theatres, I knew cricket inside and out, I had read hundreds of dramatic and literary criticisms, I was well grounded in the standard authors and writing was second nature to me. The asks which were to have defeated me brought me rudos, so that at a staff dinner the resident proprietor said of me: "Mr. Blatchford is a grand recruit. He can write anything from a comic song to a bishop's sermon, and he has not an idle bone in his body."

Soon after that the resident proprietor went out of town and the editor made a fatal mistake. I had attended a matinée when an actor-manager had made a little speech, and as I did not think the little speech important I did not report it. The editor pounced on this omission. He sent for me to his room and lectured me as a general might have lectured a neglectful subaltern. I listened in silence until he stopped speaking and then asked mildly: "Is that all you have to say, sir?" to which he answered with ponderous dignity: "Yes, and I am sorry to have to say so much." Then I gave him the demure smile which he hated and said: "Don't apologize, sir. I love to hear you talk. But please write to the resident proprietor and tell him I have left." At this the editor began to splutter that I could not leave like that. I must give a proper notice, which I cut short with the remark: "Excuse me, sir. You are confronted with an accomplished fact. I *have* left." And with that I marched out.

Then the stupid fellow got angry and put his foot on it. He wrote to Mr. Hulston that he had been obliged to discharge me for disrespect. The sequel was a telegram from Manchester, a merry little row, I came back at an increased salary and the editorial chair fell vacant.

These may seem trivial matters; but I have always felt that had I lost the battle that would have been

MY EIGHTY YEARS

the end of my journalistic career. Little things have sometimes big results. I had no journalistic experience, I knew no one in London and I had not ten pounds to call my own. But I was not afraid and I won.

XXXVII

PONTIFEX II

A FEW days after that upheaval we were called together at the office to meet the new editor, Mr. Pooley. He was a man of medium height, some fifty years of age, stout, rather bald and with a complexion as ruddy as the planet Mars. He smiled pleasantly, swelled his chest and said: "Gentlemen, I am pleased to meet you. To-day, as it happens, I am editor of *Bell's Life*. To-morrow one of you gentlemen may be editor. Ha! Phew! Meanwhile the ship is on a lee shore and it is our job to get her off. I shall do my damndest and I am sure you will back me up. Ha! Phew! Let us celebrate the occasion in the usual manner. With me, gentlemen, if you please." We then marched out, the whole staff, for the first editorial drink, my friend Fay remarking with a chuckle: "Look then! Never was such a procession seen since the beasts came out of the ark."

My friend Fay. Yes, hereabouts I met a very gallant gentleman. Edward Francis Fay was a big athletic man, standing six feet two in his usually neglected socks. He had a florid, rather stolid face, sleepy eyes and a habit of pursing his lips and drawing down his nose sarcastically. The face of a laughing faun. He was shabbily and carelessly dressed, and I can see him now as he strode across Fleet Street, with his broad shoulders squared, his hat pushed back on

his head and a heavy-headed bamboo cane tucked under his arm. I remember too that the *Chronicle* boys had prophesied we should not be friends; but we were friends in an hour and remained fast friends until at the early age of forty-two he died. Fay was a solid man. Reverses never daunted him. His wit was bright and ready, his humour full of the milk of human kindness. He hated snobs and shams, was gentle and courteous with women, and loved tramps and dogs and children. Seeing a small boy peeping through the fence round a football ground, a ragged unwashed urchin, he took him by the hand and leading him to the gate presented to the astonished Rhadamanthus his Press ticket: "Admit the representative of the *Clarion* and friend!" So his friend saw the Cup Tie, and was refreshed with ginger-beer and sausage rolls. But I must not yield to a desire to write of Fay or this will be more his book than mine. So it would, I feel, be more interesting than my tame chronicles can make it.

Fay did not officially join the staff of *Bell's Life* until the new editor took over. His advent was characteristic. It was a foggy, miserable evening and the rainy streets were muddy. Charlie Larette, known as "The Grand old Cackler," splashed to the hair, charged through the outer office crying: "Here he is." The staff were all agog. Charles blocked the doorway with his lean angular figure. Fay then appeared, clothed in fathoms of steaming ulster, looming like a winter cloud. The Cackler wriggled, giggled and looked more Japanese than usual. Then came a calm voice from the cloud: "Ha! Mister Tucker, will you kindly remove this crazy old umbrella stand from the doorway?" There was a cheer from the office, a trumpet-like "Ha, ha, ha" from the editorial sanctum. Fay had joined the staff.

It was a marvellous paper, *Bell's Life*, under Pontifex

II, and my experience of the manner in which it used to shake itself together after midnight, evolving order out of chaos, conjuring up news from the dark void of nowhither and always arriving at the finish, like Jim Smiley's mare: "A-pawing and a-snorting, and a-licking up *more* dust," just in time to beat disaster on the post—that experience taught me the valuable journalistic lesson that nothing is impossible.

The editor was a host in himself. We went to press at 1.30 a.m. I have seen him, followed by Fay, stump into the office at 1 a.m., with a cheery confident smile on his jolly red face, and ask blandly: "Now, Mr. Tucker, where *are* we, eh? On a lee shore? General sport done?"

"No, sir," with a reproachful glance at Fay, who stood as woodenly stolid as Magog.

"*Not* done? Very well. Special article on 'Practice of the Crews, from the Tow-Path,' eh?"

"No, sir. Fact is-hawling-road-in-such-a beastly condition-sir, thought-perhaps-if-you-sent-Mr.-Fay-with-me-in-morning-make special feature——" all in a breath from the Cackler.

"Hm! *Not* done. Ah—Mr. Hall"—to the master printer, who stood by simmering with rage—"how *are* we? Eh!" With a twinkle and a smile.

"Standing for copy, sir—standing. Four or five columns short, sir. Miss our train as sure as eggs. For Heaven's sake, sir——"

"Ha! ha! ha! For Heaven's sake. Eh? Didn't know they read *Bell's Life* up there. Ha! ha! ha! Wish to God they'd read it down here. Ha! ha! ha! Well, gentlemen, to work. Eh? *Phew.*"

When the editor swelled his chest and emitted that singular puffing sound, on account of which we had dubbed him "the Grand old Puffer," we knew it as a signal to clear the decks for action. Smiling and expectant we strolled up for orders.

"*Phew!* Mr. Fay, your pen of the ready-writer, eh? *Phew!* I'll dictate. Ah! Bleys—eh? Mr. Tucker, be so good as to—ah—get me *Truth, World, Echo, Pink-un* and ah! *Phew!* ah—scissors and paste. And—ah—Mr. Blatchford will, I'm sure—ah—facile pen—ah—special descriptive—ah—'Crews at Practice'—ah—from the—ah—tow-path—ah—facts from *Evening Standard*. *Phew!*

"Now, Mr. Fay, although the Kingsclere colt shows rather more daylight under him than a connoisseur might wish (damn this paste—all lumps). Where's the *Echo*? [*snip, snap, dab-dab-dab*] ah—still, being sweet about the hocks and filled with the (*Pink-un*, please) blood of mighty sires—here, Mr. Hall, are the first three pars. 'General sport' [*snip, snap, dab-dab-dab*]—he might be expected to show a clean pair of heels to more cracks than one—if, indeed, does not prove himself [*snip, snap, dab-dab-dab*] the finest horse Victoria era. *Phew!* [*dab-dab*] ask Mr. Hall how much General Sport?"

Thus, dictating his racing article and clipping original pars. for general sport at the same time, would this truly great man steer, work, and captain his ship off the rocks night after night in the space of half an hour.

Our friendly editor was very loyal to his staff, as the following incident will show. *Bell's Life* was not prospering and the editor was seeking stunts. He came to me one morning with orders to visit the low-class boxing shows in the East End. "I've got you a guide," he said, "an ex-champion light-weight. I want a lurid article: the Dickens touch. I know I can rely on your dramatic pen." I disliked boxing intensely and as I did not want to be sent on another such mission I made the article as lurid as I knew how. And one line bit. While we were passing through a very shy neighbourhood my guide remarked: "This

is hot country: they would up-end you for ninepence." What journalist could resist so picturesque a saying? I gave it a good show.

Next morning there arrived at *Bell's Life* office a deputation of East End artists with flat noses and prominent ears who waited upon the editor with a request for the name of the bloke who wrote those lies about boxin'! "And why," asked Mr. Pooley, "do you wish for the writer's name?" To this one of the deputation answered that if they might have an introduction to the blighter they would up-end him for nothing and he could keep his ninepence.

This put the editor on his mettle. Swelling his 42-inch chest and glaring at his visitors haughtily he said: "Ah, very well, gentlemen. *I* wrote the article. Ha! Phew!"

"You, Guvnor. Ow I sye!"

"Yes, sir," said the noble Pooley. "Ha! In my capacity as editor of *Bell's Life*, ha! I am responsible for every word which appears in that, ha, paper. Phew!"

There was an interval of eloquent silence, then the editor added: "And, ha, now, gentlemen, we will go out and have a drink."

There was some shuffling of feet, then a hoarse voice spoke: "Lor lumme, Guvnor, you're a real old sport." After which the editor led forth his men in triumph.

XXXVIII

THE NEW PAPER

OUR editor's wish that people would read *Bell's Life* "down here" was not granted and the old paper was incorporated with *Sporting Life*. Meanwhile Mr. Hulton had started *The Sunday Chronicle* in Manchester, in opposition to *The Umpire*, and Fay was engaged for the London Letter while I was put on to do the weekly leader. That was, I think, in August, 1886. My first leader was, on instructions received, a defence of Sunday papers, and it pleased Mr. Hulton and the staff so much that I was loaded with compliments. That was my first step in a success which surprises me as much now as it did then. And here I feel I ought to say something which may be regarded as egotistical, but is not.

The fact is that all through my life there seems to have been a conspiracy to spoil me. In the Army, in the workshops, on the Press, in the Socialist movement, I was treated with a queer sort of tender esteem and affection, resembling the regard which grown-ups show to a favoured and favourite youngster. This embarrassing attitude was as marked amongst my personal friends as amongst the public. If my common sense had not been stronger than my vanity I must have fallen a victim to megalomania. As it was, I blushed and wondered. I was grateful, though, for all this unmerited kindness, and that is why I allude to it here. The working men and women whom I tried

to serve did me too much honour. I want to say that I have not forgotten. If I shrank from applause and praise, as I did, I realized that it was due to the overflowing kindness and solid goodness of those with whom I was privileged to work. I will be honest all round too, and confess that in the quiet of my retirement I sometimes read with a shy and deprecating pleasure some of the generous tributes bestowed upon me in more active days. Well, thank goodness, I did not lose my head. I never fell into the contemptible and grievous error of imagining I was in any sense a superior person.

The years to which I am coming now, though interesting to me, do not, I fear, contain much story. We were in Barnes when the *Sunday Chronicle* was born and Barnes was not kind to us. We had much illness and lost two of our babies. We nearly lost the other, and I sat up and kept awake for nine nights and days while I nursed her through the scarlet fever. Then we took a holiday in the Isle of Wight, and in the autumn of the Jubilee year, 1887, we went to Manchester.

The *Chronicle* was making slow headway and Mr. Hulston was very anxious. He used to go into the parks on Sunday morning and count the readers of his own and the rival paper. We gained steadily and he was delighted when our circulation reached the 100,000.

I think it was in '88 I went to Ireland to inquire into the Home Rule movement. While there some of the Irish M.P.s gave me the briefs and evidence of a trial at which a friend of John Bright had been nonsuited in a libel action against some person who had denounced him as a rack-renting absentee landlord. When I accused the gentleman in the *Sunday Chronicle* John Bright wrote to the daily papers and said it was a lie and that the *Chronicle* would fare badly in an

action for libel. Now, Mr. Hulton hated litigation, but he had the quiet dogged courage of the Lancashire business man, and when I showed him the evidence and said I meant to fight, he pushed his silk hat back on his head and said: "Very well. I'll see it through." I returned to the subject in the paper and asked Mr. Bright to come on with his libel action. We heard no more of it. Nearly thirty years later, when I was back on the *Chronicle* and the late Sir Edward Hulton was in charge, we were threatened because of some articles I had written about crucifixion in the Army. History repeated itself. Sir Edward Hulton showed his father's courage and we proved our case up to the hilt. At that time Lord Derby was Secretary of State for War and he was very fair and helpful, so that we came to an understanding that any future complaints of the kind should be reported to him personally. There were two cases later in which men overstayed their leave and were liable to the death sentence. As the cases were very hard I appealed to Lord Derby. He answered, quite rightly, that he could not interfere with discipline in the field; but the men were not shot. In one case the Adjutant-General wrote to me personally to say the man had been sentenced, but had been released on probation, pardon depending on his future conduct. The Adjutant-General added: "I thought you would be glad of this information," which was exceedingly kind and thoughtful of him. I hope the boy came through the war; but I never heard.

Perhaps because I had served in the Army, perhaps because I always spoke well of soldiers and the Service, and perhaps because of my efforts to warn the country of the impending war, officers and men of the Army and Navy always treated me with special courtesy. During the pre-war Army manœuvres officers would come and chat with me about the Service. General

Grierson, passing my car with his staff as the Guards were marching, called out cheerily: "Morning, Mr. Blatchford. Do you like them as well as ever?" General Sir Ian Hamilton told me about the new Army and the new training. He said the discipline was excellent and the men were splendid.

I suppose these soldiers felt I had done my duty. Their friendliness was a nice contrast to the aloofness of the politicians. I would not go so far as the Turkish officer who heliographed to our lines after one of the Gallipoli battles: "Good luck to all soldiers and the devil take all politicians," but I have never had reason to love the gentlemen of England in Parliament assembled. Of which more in later pages.

Of my Home Rule expedition I have not much to tell. I came away puzzled and amused and—uneasy. I could not understand the Irish psychology. Readers may remember the Curtin murder. Curtin, a peasant farmer, was shot by moonlighters who raided his house. I was taken out to the place, on which a police guard still remained. I saw the priest, a burly powerful man, and I asked him why an innocent Irishman had been shot by his own countrymen. The priest said: "Well, they think he had a right to give up his arms." This puzzled me and I asked: "Would you give up your arms?" Whereupon he made a square jaw and answered grimly: "I would *not*." What could a poor logical Englishman make of that?

On the hillside in County Cork were some so-called farms. The peasants had carried soil up and made potato patches on the rocky steeps. I asked one of them how they worked on such steep declivities. "Steep is it," he said, "sure 'tis like a map hanging against a wall."

In Cork I asked a Protestant minister if in the event of Home Rule being granted he feared ill usage

by the Catholics. He said: "No. I have no fear of my Catholic brothers. But these Nonconformists. Wait till I tell you. They came interfering in the hospital where I'm chaplain, and when I objected, do you know what they did to me?" I said I could not guess, and he banged his fist down on the desk and answered: "The rascals! They stopped my water-closet."

I was in Ireland for about a week and I was shadowed by detectives all the time. A really Irish situation. Irish constables shadowing an Englishman who came to Ireland in the interests of the Irish.

One fraud I did expose. A Tory paper had printed lurid accounts of the visits of their representative to the shop-keepers of Cork and the articles had been written by a woman journalist in Manchester. What fools these mortals be!

I come now to a time when the petty stream of my own affairs ran into the great river of life: a time when I was no longer concerned solely with my own interests and the interests of my employer; but was compelled by circumstances to take part in big developments and the conflict of great causes.

The *Sunday Chronicle* in its early years, being a semi-sporting Sunday organ which did not aspire to the dignity of an editorial and gave itself no highbrow airs, was rather looked down upon by respectable dailies. I don't suppose any first-class daily would have employed a single member of our staff, and I am convinced that a staff of orthodox journalists would have failed to make the *Chronicle* a success. There was not a public-school man, nor a properly trained journalist amongst us, but because we belonged to the crowd and understood the crowd we knew how to amuse and interest them, and the paper sold like hot cakes. We had a splashy, jolly, colloquial style, an intimate style, which the strictly proper journals

considered bad form. Our work was not so cheap as it seemed, though, and it suited our readers and our purpose; it had at least two merits: it was easy to read and easy to understand. When a few years later we came to deal with different and serious questions those qualities proved remarkably effectual.

The *Chronicle*, then, was a peculiar paper, worked on peculiar lines by peculiar writers. We had no editor. Each man did his own job his own way, though the sporting side was directed by Mr. Hulton. The result was unconventional and breezy. We certainly wrote a good deal of nonsense and some rubbish, but when cocksure opponents, encouraged by our apparent lack of discipline, fell foul of us, they generally found we carried more guns than they expected.

XXXIX

THE SLUMS

THOSE were halcyon days. The circulation rose and our salaries rose with it. Mr. Hulton was a generous employer and we worked with a will. But one day, seeking the home of a woman who had appealed to me in her distress, I wandered into Shantytown. The result was an expedition of discovery into Manchester's slums. The happy days of irresponsibility were over. We had sensed the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains and the shouting. The mercurial, mocking *Sunday Chronicle* awoke to serious purpose. If we had known it, that bright morning when our artist, William Palmer, and I set out with a map and a camera, we had incurred a sentence of twenty years' hard labour.

Here a caution: the word slums must not be taken to mean a few obscure courts of insanitary houses crowded with improvident unemployables. It would be nearer the mark to say that the slums we inspected formed the bulk of the working-class dwellings in the city of Manchester. There were slum areas housing from 20,000 to 60,000 of the poorer workers, in which there was not a single decent habitation. Poverty there was and much of it, and wretchedness to make the heart ache; but the majority of the slum dwellings were inhabited by workers.

We spent some months on that task before the articles appeared. We visited every court and alley

and street and square and took photographs and plans. And when the articles did appear they caused a good deal of talk—and nothing else. One paper, I remember, accused us of “thrusting the filth of the slums under the noses of decent people;” but the decent people did not seem to be disturbed. The effect of the ugly revelation upon Manchester was negligible. The effect upon us was more lasting. We had fed full of horrors, we had seen the enemy in the Gate.

Then came the second phase. Our guide, a queer little unemployed labourer named Waddington, who was full of enthusiasm and statistics, insisted that after “doing” the exteriors of the dwellings I ought to go inside and meet the tenants. That accorded with my sense of duty, and one morning I set off alone and went hopefully into a small court in the penurious district of Hulme. That was forty years ago, and the impression it made upon my mind is still vivid and painful and grim.

I visited three “houses.” In the first, a kind of damp kitchen, with a stone floor, I found a half-clothed woman and four hungry children. Husband, a bargeman, out of work. Set off the day before on tramp. Might get a job in Cheshire. No news yet. No money, no food, no fire. I perjured my soul to the tune of a few hopeful words, put my hand in my pocket and left.

In the second house, a kind of damp kitchen, with a stone floor, I found an old man and his old wife bedridden with rheumatism. No money, no fire, no food. I said: “Cheerio, old dears, I’ll call again,” put my hand in my pocket and left.

The third English home was like the others only “more so.” Darker, damper, the worn paper peeling off the walls. Here I found a thin shred of a woman, blue with cold. Husband out on tramp, looking

for a job. No fire, no food, no hope. On the miserable bed was something which looked like a claret bottle wrapped in rags. The woman saw me looking at it and said: "Baby's none so well to-day." I went and looked at Baby. Baby was very thin and white and his little chest was wheezing. I said: "This child has bronchitis."

The poor little mother was as helpless as a frightened rabbit. I put my hand in my pocket; I went out, found a doctor and asked him to see the child and send the bill to me. Then I went home. I was, in the language of the Army, "fed up."

The baby died. The husband did not find work. A friend of mine on one of the railways gave him a job. He had to walk four miles and start work at 6 a.m., and his wage was 16s. a week. That was the best Modern Athens could do for him.

After taking a few days to recover my serenity I started again, in the Ancoats district. Here I had the help of the Sisters of Mercy, ladies so sweet and gentle, so compassionate and kind, that I felt I ought always to stand bareheaded in their presence. They were beautifully patient with me: a black-browed, truculent, angry man. One of them, Sister Gertrude, used to tell me: "You are too hasty, too rash; please try to bear and forbear." She made me very sensible of my crude masculinity. But I could not help it—the iron had entered into my soul.

One cold morning, in a bedless, fireless kitchen, I was introduced to a lame wood-chopper. He owed 10s. for rent and was to be evicted on the morrow. His daughter had gone out to pawn her petticoat. I had come from other scenes of misery and was feeling sore. I rapped out: "Who owns this insanitary kennel? Who's the agent? Here, take this and pay the skunk." The sister looked at me with mild reproach and shook her head.

"You are so fierce," she said, "have patience." I apologized and went off growling like a terrier who has been pulled out of a fight.

The good sisters were not alone in their opinion of my harshness. The average comfortable reader, to whom poverty and distress were remote and inconsiderable phenomena, regarded my stories as lurid exaggerations. They had not seen and could not imagine the truth. Young Mr. Hulton (the late Sir Edward) said he thought I dipped my brush in too strong colour. I asked him to let me show him round, and he came.

I took him into a slum hovel where the husband who had just died of consumption was laid out dead on the deal table. There was no fire and no bed. Three young children cowered together on the floor with a couple of sacks over them and the widow sat on an empty box crying herself blind. Young Hulton looked round, emptied all the money out of his pockets and walked out without a word. When I spoke to him he could only shake his head. He was unable to control his voice. And he would not go into another house. He had seen all he needed to bring home to him the naked, ugly truth.

The painful experience of the slums was followed by a pleasant interlude: the founding of the Cinderella Club. I was making for the Exchange Station one evening when a girl child met me and offered me a box of matches. She said it was her last box and she wanted to sell it as she was going to a party. I took the matches and asked her about her treat. She said it was a party given by a Catholic Sunday School and she went off in high glee and left me thinking. A party! A school party.

I remembered when as a poor child such parties gave me great delight. How easy to please a child, and a child of the poor. And why not, I asked

MY EIGHTY YEARS

myself, why not weekly parties for children of the slums?

We founded within a few days the first Cinderella Club. The meeting was called by the *Sunday Chronicle*. My idea was not to teach or lecture the children, but to amuse them; but as they could not be amused if they were hungry, we decided to feed them first and entertain them afterwards. The club was a success from the word go.

XL

CHECK

A PART from these various sorrows we of the *Chronicle* staff were on velvet. We had good wives, good children, staunch friends, big salaries, pleasant work, an eightpenny income tax and sound whisky at 3s. 6d. a bottle. But it was, in the words of the poet Bunn, "Too beautiful to last." It did not last. It was my fault. I had a flair for getting into hot water. I wrote a leader one morning in which I ridiculed Socialism. A Liverpool man sent me a personal protest. He said I knew nothing of Socialism and was talking nonsense. I pondered his criticism and it was borne in upon me that he was right. I did not know anything about Socialism beyond what I had read in other papers and I had been talking through my hat. I said so in the *Chronicle* and asked for information. The Liverpool workman sent me a pamphlet "What is Socialism," by William Morris and H. M. Hyndman. That, as the boys say, "tore it." I had thought out an economic scheme for myself; but directly I grasped the collective idea I saw that it was what I wanted. I was full of anger and pity for the wrongs and sufferings of the poor, and burning with eagerness to help the under-dog I went in for Socialism, as my friends remarked, "baldheaded."

That was a rash step and I complicated it with a foolish one. A cousin of mine blew in one day

with the music of an opera and asked me to write the libretto. He said he knew a man who would finance it and we would share the profits. Yes, he mentioned the profits. I wrote the libretto. It was a troublesome job as I had to write the lyrics to fit the music. When it was finished the man with the money failed to materialize. My cousin was very downcast and I said, "Never mind. I will produce it myself." Just like that. And I was forty and should have known better. Well, it was a "sperience" and it was amusing; but when the seven weeks' tour was ended and I found my bank balance had melted "like snow upon the desert's dusty face" leaving me £400 in debt, I remembered a speech made at the rehearsal to the captain of the guard by the stage manager, Paul Valentine. He had one of those shrill crying voices and he said: "My dear sir. My dear sir. *Don't* be a — fool." But it was too late for me to profit by that wisdom. The fates had given me a lesson and they now proceeded to rub it in. Mr. Hulton put his foot down. He did not like Socialism and would not have it in his paper.

Now, I liked Mr. Hulton, we all did. He was, as I have said, a generous boss and if he had spoken to me on the subject I could hardly have gone against his wish. It was his paper and he was quite within his rights. But he gave orders over my head and that offended me. I went to his private office and told him if I could not write what I believed in the *Chronicle* I must find another paper. We were both self-willed men and we faced each other like two jealous dogs with their tails up. I was the most obdurate because I was in a tight place: faced with an ultimatum. Stop writing Socialism or lose my job. After a few minutes of cold drawn talk, Mr. Hulton said: "I don't want you to go;" but my pride was touched and I answered stiffly: "There is no

other way. You will not have Socialism in your paper and I won't write anything else." So that was that and we parted.

The "giddy round of Fortune's wheel." In March, 1891, I had a fat bank balance and a salary of £1,000 a year. In October I was out of work and £400 in debt. I did not worry. Not having been born with a silver spoon in my mouth I was inured to the "sad vicissitude of things." I had always got my own living and I had faith in my star. I went out and got another job at £10 a week and looked hopefully for new worlds to conquer. The fates, however, had not yet glutted their ire. My friend, Mr. A. M. Thompson, found the backwash of my wake uncomfortable. The wind in Withy Grove was easterly. He and I were intimate friends. Mr. Hulton was annoyed. After a few difficult weeks A. M. Thompson resigned.

This was a new situation. We called in E. F. Fay from London and my brother from Halifax, and the four of us with William Palmer, the artist, talked things over and decided to start a Socialist paper of our own. Thus was born that extraordinary organ, the *Clarion*. We had very little money and plenty of enthusiasm. We knew that our venture was a forlorn hope and in our manifesto we quoted Lear's lines:

They went to sea in a sieve, they did,
In a sieve they went to sea.
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
In a sieve they went to sea.

The verse was prophetic. The ironic gods attended to that. The day on which our first posters illuminated the walls of Modern Athens brought with it a terrific storm of wind and rain which swept the hoardings clean. Not a *Clarion* poster remained

to greet the eye and cheer the heart of Mr. and Mrs. Demos. So! And when the first number went to press, the paper, too rich in china clay, refused to hold the ink and something went wrong with the machinery. At one o'clock in the morning I was awakened out of my beauty sleep and hurried to the printers, where I found the press, as if with a wicked glee, tearing our first poor *Clarion* to strips while the staff looked on dismayed.

But we pulled through. Our first issue was a fearful and wonderful thing and half the pages were unreadable. The staff of the *Sunday Chronicle* laughed us to derision. They were offering to bet new hats that our rag did not live a month. The sequel was a tragic surprise. Those bets were offered on the 12th of December, 1891. Within the next year or two the prophets were all dead. Six of them died within a few months of each other, and the *Clarion*, which is still alive, was going strong on its 21st birthday. A strange happening. They were fine fellows the *Chronicle* men and we regretted our estrangement. Our friendship was not broken, only suspended. They had to be loyal to their salt.

XLI

THE CLARION

WE started the *Clarion* on a capital of £400. My brother put in £50. A. M. Thompson and I mortgaged our insurance policies and put in £350 between us. Dear old Fay had an empty pouch and could give us only his blessing. And so in the winter of 1891 we buckled to and began to hoe our barren and toilsome row.

We were quite merry in those lean years. We gave up cigarettes and smoked our old pipes. We wore up our old clothes and boots. We worked hard and laughed free. The circulation was low and profits there were none. We each drew £4 a week, and if our pockets were bare our cupboards were not. Not even in the great cause would we have let our wives and children feel the pinch. But I do not like to think what would have happened if I had died. I am not at all sure that I did right in gambling on my health and endurance.

We hoped at first for the support of the workers, but the workers were not awake to the value of journals devoted to their cause. They are not yet awake to that value. In no other direction have they so signally failed to see their own interest. In 1924 Labour polled 5,000,000 votes and they have not yet a real live Labour paper with the support needed to make it a power. We did not grumble. We were far too busy. With a circulation of about 40,000 we

plodded on. Then in 1894 I had a brain wave. We had published a series of my articles in book form with the title "Merrie England" and had sold some 20,000 copies at a shilling. I suggested an edition at a penny. We found that we could do it at a slight loss if we could sell 100,000. My partners were doubtful. They asked who was going to buy such numbers. I pressed the scheme and the edition was put in hand and advertised in the *Clarion*. The result was startling. Before the 100,000 copies were printed 200,000 were ordered. In less than a year we had printed and sold three-quarters of a million copies and the *Clarion* circulation had gone up to 60,000. This success was due to the Socialist and Labour rank and file. If they did not see the use of Labour papers they did see the use of "Merrie England."

"Merrie England" was published soon after the formation of the I.L.P., when things were beginning to hum. It came at the right time. Enthusiasts bought the book by the thousand. It was sold in the streets in Scotland and the North. In Glasgow the scouts went out with a cargo on a lorry. I was offered copies again and again by amateur hawkers who did not know me. I saw one scout in Glasgow sell a copy to a constable on point duty. One day, in Manchester, as I was standing by the train ready to start for London, the engine-driver came to me and said: "I've got them with me. Six of 'em." He showed me a copy of the penny "Merrie England" and slapped his chest where others were concealed. Another time I was waiting in the office of Messrs. Lewis and Lewis, to have an interview with Sir George, when a grave clerk stepped into the room and, pulling a copy of "it" out of his pocket, whispered: "Got it, you see; always carry one." Again on a train in Yorkshire, a young ironworker with a smutty face got into my carriage and soon began to

read. I was curious to know what held his attention so closely; but could not see the title. Presently he turned to me and held out a copy of "Merrie England." "Read this, mister?" he said. I replied that I had heard of it. "Well," he said, "read it. I'll give it to you. I can buy another." I said I did not think it would interest me. "Interest you?" He was so indignant. "You'll read it over and over. It'll teach you something, this will." But I declined his offer.

Then America got the book and sold out big editions. As it was not copyright in the States they did not offer any royalties; but one firm was so enterprising as to ask me to write a letter saying theirs was the only authorized edition. There were translations into Dutch, German, Spanish, Italian, Danish and some more. I don't remember; and though copies of the translations were sent to me I did not keep them. The vogue of the book was a surprise to me. I suppose it was the right thing at the right time. Frankly I have never been able to understand the success of "Merrie England." It has always seemed to me just a plain appreciation of Socialism. A clear statement of a case. I have never been proud of it. Still, I believe it did its work. Indeed, I will go as far as to say that during the first ten years of the *Clarion's* life that by no means popular paper had more influence on public opinion in this country than any other English journal, *The Times* included.

About this time, I think in 1893, a gentleman called to see me. He said he had a proposition to make on account of a syndicate. I was, he informed me, a very popular writer and if I would write a weekly article for his clients they would pay me a salary of £1,500 a year. This was a proposition indeed. I had just cast off my last pair of broken boots and was treading the straight and thorny path in cricket shoes. Thirty pounds a week! But was there a catch in it?

I asked were there any conditions and he said "none," adding, "of course the article must be exclusive." Alas! It was a dream. "You mean," I said, "that I must cease to write for the *Clarion*?" That was precisely what he did mean. So we did not trade. It was, I suppose, an attempt to spike our guns. But how tantalizing, and what bad guessers they must have been. I felt as J. R. Clynes must have felt when a heckler asked him if the capitalists had bought him. "No," said Clynes, "they have not enough money." Yet, in political circles the idea that every man has his price seems a common obsession. In the early days of the Labour movement our Liberal opponents twitted us openly and frequently with the taunt of "Tory gold." We were accused of accepting Tory gold as a bribe for which we were to split the Liberal vote. Tory gold was a standing joke amongst us: a comic myth. Yes. But twenty years later, when I was writing on the German menace in the *Daily Mail*, a Cabinet minister said—but let us not anticipate. I am dealing here with the 'nineties.

The *Clarion* having now been forced out into the white light of popularity, it fell to me to attend Socialist meetings. Neither of my partners would show his face on the platform, so I had to go. I used to say that each member of the *Clarion* staff did as he pleased, except the editor, who did as he was told. There was truth in it. I hated public speaking. I could talk well enough to a few listeners in a small room; but in the presence of a large audience I felt as a man feels in that disconcerting dream when he meets the people coming out of church and finds he has forgotten to put his trousers on. Horrible situation. As Dick Swiveller said: "Not even an umbrella." And then it seemed unnatural to have to shout. Thus it became a legend in the movement that Blatchford could not speak.

XLII

THE MOVEMENT

THE I.L.P. was founded, I think, in 1892. It was founded, or started, by seven men. I believe I was one of the seven; but I am not sure and it does not matter. It was obvious to the *Clarion* men from the beginning that there would be snags in the stream. A newly formed party, meant to be independent of the other parties, must draw its recruits almost entirely from the older parties or from various existing sects. To the I.L.P. came women and men from the ranks of Tories, Liberals, Radicals, Non-conformists and Marxians. Many of these brought with them sectarian or party shibboleths which they had not outgrown. There were Free-Traders, Home Rulers, Local Optionists, Republicans, Roman Catholics, Salvationists, Church and Chapel-goers and believers in the cosmopolitan brotherhood of the workers. What was rather loosely called: "The Solidarity of Nations."

With none of these beliefs or theories had we *Clarion* men any concern. We were out for Socialism and nothing but Socialism and we were Britons first and Socialists next. We had, for instance, sentiments of cordial friendship for other nations; but we did not believe that foreign workers would turn against their rulers in case of international disputes. The danger was, as we foresaw, that the heterogeneous hosts of the Labour movement would expect us to think

and act with them in all questions political, social or religious. It behoved us then, like Agag, to "walk delicately." When after a while signs of jealousy and difference began to appear we left practical politics to the I.L.P. and devoted ourselves to teaching Socialism, so that there was no serious trouble until the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899. Then nearly all the Socialists and Labour people declared themselves pro-Boer and I remained pro-British. That was a difference of conviction on a matter of international politics and had nothing to do with Socialism; but the majority of our party could not understand that, and I incurred a great deal of odium as the result of my action. The Socialists derided the slogan "My country right or wrong;" but they acted on the principle of "My party, right or wrong." There was much angry recrimination and the prestige of the *Clarion* suffered. That caused me no serious concern. The *Clarion* was founded and conducted in the public interest and if the public chose to disparage or thwart the *Clarion* that was their loss. We had no axe to grind and no prospect of gaining money or advancement through the paper. The pro-Boers went their way and we went ours. I had published a second Socialist book, "Britain for the British," and continued to sell it at the lowest possible price, and the Socialists continued to use it and at the same time went on growling about my imperialism. The situation was not devoid of humour.

Now, at this time of the day my personal opinions and beliefs have no public importance; but one does not like to be misunderstood or misrepresented. I have, all my life, honoured truth. To warp or conceal the truth is not only immoral, it is foolish. If I know a road to lead west and proclaim that it leads east I am not only a liar, I am a fool. If I see a signpost directing travellers out of the way and do not

try to alter it my conduct is dishonest and cowardly. This is to me a principle as solid and sacred as the law of gravity or the multiplication table. A person who tries to mislead the people by cooking accounts or monkeying with the ready reckoner is a malicious idiot. So, all my life, when I have believed a thing ought to be said I have said it. Fear of the consequence never affected me. Twice two are four though the skies fall. So when I felt that the dogmas of the orthodox religion were a bar to intellectual progress I attacked the orthodox religion. I knew my prestige would suffer, I thought it probable that my action would kill the *Clarion*. My friends thought so too; but they did not attempt to dissuade me. I published "God and my Neighbour" and Labour scolded me again: the book had an ill effect on municipal elections! And the true believers called me an infidel. It was a great fight and I enjoyed it. I hold, too, that I was right. I feel confident that fifty years hence all the errors and superstitions against which I protested will have disappeared. They are going quickly one by one.

Let me now put myself right with regard to Socialism. When I took up the Socialist cause forty years ago I said again and again that we could not have Socialism without Socialists. Such a change could not be forced on a reluctant country by Act of Parliament. Our first task was to educate the public. I believed then that Socialism would be the best form of state for a nation of Socialists. To-day, I think it might be the best form of state for a nation of Socialists. I say it might, because there is always a danger in a democracy of infringement of individual liberty. Democracies, as Anatole France believed, are overfond of making laws. In the Socialist state we might, as Artemus Ward said: "Be governed too much." My experience of Socialists and Labourists is that they

lacked toleration. It would be a sad sequel to the great Labour movement if the people enslaved themselves by their own laws. This danger seems to me to be a very real one. At the time of writing, with a Labour Government just returned to power, I feel the people will be wise to see that their brakes are in order. Am I a Socialist now? Yes, always—if Socialism will be for the good of the British people. I am ready to sacrifice Socialism for the sake of England; but never to sacrifice England for the sake of Socialism.

Now the Clarion Fellowship was a very different proposition. It was a phenomenon unique in my experience. In the early years of the *Clarion* a number of Birmingham readers, who had formed a Clarion Cycle Club, wrote to the paper to say that their members would like to meet the staff. A meeting was arranged with the result that the writers and readers of the *Clarion* became friends. Clarion clubs sprang up in Scotland and the North and Midlands and an annual Clarion meet was arranged. It was the Rev. J. Cartmel Robinson who gave to these informal groups the name of "The Fellowship" and so united them as a single body with the policy of goodwill, good service and good humour. At the meets, which were kept up year after year with great success, we found our own musicians and entertainers and had jolly times. The affairs of the Fellowship were left in the hands of a committee of three who never did anything but re-elect themselves at each successive meet. All went merrily for some years and then, a number of earnest young men joined up, and there arose a demand for "organization." I pointed out at the time that the Fellowship was a genial crowd of congenial spirits and that it was impossible to organize friendship. But the Fellowship was organized and its glamour slowly faded. The charm

and strength of the Fellowship were inherent in that freedom and spontaneous accord. Given a committee and rules and orders the Fellowship became a mere organization. The old Fellowship gave us something precious which no organization had to offer, the organized Fellowship could only go a little better than any other party organization. And now the clouds began to gather, and in a few years the storm broke, and I with many others was swept out of the Socialist movement into something greater and more arduous. The Great War changed the aspect of the world and the meaning of life for all of us.

Well, those were pleasant years. The Fellowship was a real right thing. We made many genuine friendships and kept them. Such an experience could not have been bought nor earned. It was a gift of the gods.

Let me next speak of the men and women who made and led the Socialist party through the years of hard labour and adversity. The public could not cotton to the idea of a third party. They had been bred and born in the two-party tradition. The Tories they knew and the Liberals they knew, but an independent party which took orders from neither of the old parties, but opposed them both, they could not believe in. These Socialists and I.L.P. men must be the dupes or jackals of the Tories, bribed to break the Liberal ranks. Or, if that were not the explanation, they were mere demagogues with some kind of illicit axe to grind. So they wrote and spoke of us scornfully as "paid agitators." There was not much pay for these stalwart pioneers and there was not, to all seeming, any chance of kudos or promotion. Hard work, hard knocks and hard fare were their portion. No woman or man inspired by mercenary motives would have worked in the movement for half a year.

MY EIGHTY YEARS

They were suspected and reviled on every hand, defeated in every battle. When they began with an almost heroic temerity to set up municipal or parliamentary candidates the monotonous results of the polls would have broken any but the stoutest hearts. How often did we open our papers to read:

EATANSWILL ELECTION

RESULT OF THE POLL:

Sir George Speakeasy (Conservative) . . .	13,450
Mr. Athanasis Blowhard (Liberal) . . .	12,201
John Smith (Socialist)	195

But the movement moved. The party grew. The Socialists had one great advantage over the old parties. Their propaganda was continuous. The Tories and Liberals only took their coats off a short time before an election. The Socialists never ceased working. Their meetings went on all the year round, year after year. Their members and their leaders never slackened, never went to sleep. They had active helpers by tens of thousands. They had something more vital and inspiring than a party; they had a cause. They had a definite aim. They knew what they wanted and that if they were to get it they must work for it. So the party increased in numbers and their candidates learnt to turn defeat into victory. They won seats on town and city councils, even seats in Parliament, and they gained in confidence and experience. Tory gold does not explain that progress. The new party was better trained and better led than the old. It was like Cromwell's army, "an army of men of religion." It was what the Germans called our Old Contemptibles, "an army of non-commissioned officers." The rank and file understood as well as their commanders what they were fighting for and were as able and eager to win. I will say for all the Socialist and Labour leaders I met that they were

absolutely honest and sincere, and that they "did not know when they were beaten."

In those years I travelled all over the United Kingdom, took the chair at hundreds of meetings and listened to scores of speakers, and I always felt more affection for the audiences than for their instructors. Our speakers were good speakers. They were diligent, honest men, giving of their best; but oratory nearly always leaves me cold; when it does not, it leaves me bored and that simply because I am a writer. Bacon said, "Writing maketh an exact man," and it is true. Speeches must, in the nature of things, be less compact than writings. If a speech is closely knit and devoid of repetitions the audience can neither grasp it nor contain it. The written word can be assimilated slowly. The reader can return to the writing again and again, he can dwell on the style and check the logic. The speaker must get his message across to the audience within a given time and so must stress or repeat his arguments. His success depends upon the ready perception and the memory of his audience. This diffusion and repetition which are merits in the orator are blemishes in the eyes of the writer. A good speech, because it is a good speech, is to him thin and wordy. He is trained to strive for terseness, he prizes the *mot juste*. He compresses where the orator expands. That is why a writer seldom cares to make speeches or to listen to them. And then a speaker to be successful must be something of an actor. He exploits his personality; his voice, his inflexions, his gestures are amongst his assets, and these physical appeals strike the writer as meretricious. He himself never sees his audience, nor is seen by them. His only contact is through cold type. A musical voice, a handsome presence, a disarming smile, great histrionic ability cut no ice in journalism or literature, the writer

must rely upon what William Watson calls "pen-craft."

A public meeting is more vivid and exciting to those on the platform than to those in the body of the hall. I have read profound and subtle works on the "Psychology of Crowds," and I am not concerned to dispute the unfavourable and contemptuous estimates their authors tender of the crowd's mentality. But there is a difference between a crowd and an audience. An audience has in general a more definite purpose, a better sense of discipline. I am, of course, speaking here of the large, crowded and enthusiastic meetings at which I took the chair during the growth of the Labour Party. A mere mob may consist, as Herbert Spencer said the public consisted, of antagonistic units; but a fairly unanimous audience is, like a regiment, though in a less degree, an organism. It has a corporate soul and, which is important, a corporate atmosphere or aura. In the tense minutes after the audience assembles and before the speeches begin those on the platform become conscious of this aura. It affects one as an intoxicating increase of heat and light. The air seems charged with electricity, the audience, talking and rippling with suppressed excitement, seem to be keyed up, like a stringed instrument. This atmosphere must affect the speakers unless they possess enormous self-control, and those who have experienced it will make allowance for occasional indiscretions or emotional exaggerations. It is small wonder if a speaker, having inspired the audience with his eloquence, should be carried away by their applause and enthusiasm. The aroused and pulsating human sympathy of a large audience, the fact that thousands of shining eyes are fixed upon him, that thousands of minds are keeping step with his, must quicken the pulses of the soberest orator. Who could keep his sang-froid under such influence?

I confess I used to feel excited. Though, as a trained soldier, I did not show it.

In the presence of such a potent and mysterious human organism the most powerful speaker seems comparatively insignificant. Or so I feel always. And then the speaker must think of his reputation and of the influence of his speech. He must, indeed, to some extent be self-centred. He remains an ego, outside that corporate soul. But the audience, at any enthusiastic meeting, are selfless for the time like the waves of a sea. They are not men and women. They are a molten human force. They radiate hope and faith and sympathy and goodwill. I was made aware of the same inspiring spiritual force in Manchester and Liverpool, in Leeds and Bradford, in Edinburgh and Glasgow and Cardiff and many other towns. Those audiences did not only feel, they understood. They upheld the courage and resolution of their speakers as the Israelites upheld the arms of Moses as he prayed for victory throughout the battle. They did not so much follow their leaders; rather I might say they carried them. Their movement was not politics to them; it was religion. To know them as I knew them was to respect and trust them. They were magnificent. That is why I say that I always felt for audiences a sincere affection. That is why I still have faith in democracy, why I still admire and love the British people. They are a great people; brave and patient, good-humoured, sensible and sincere. They will arrive.

This is the story of a man's life, not a history of the Labour movement or the *Clarion*; but one incident I cannot pass over, as it illustrates the enthusiasm behind the Socialism of those years. It was, I think, soon after the publication of the penny "Merrie England" that we had a visit from Mr. William Ranstead, a stranger to us all, and were as much surprised as

pleased when he handed us a cheque for £250 to help the paper. We offered him a partnership on the spot; but that he declined. He said though, then or soon afterwards, that if we would make the business into a limited company he would join. So it was done. We put the capital at £10,000 and Ranstead paid in £1,000 as a set-off to the goodwill. Some years later, when his luck turned, we paid him back his thousand. On the day when the lawyer read to us the formidable articles of association I asked our partner, Edward Francis Fay, if he understood the new arrangement. "Of course I understand," said Fay, and feeling doubtful I said, "Well, what does it mean, Ned?" My friend answered with dignity: "Mean? It means I come to Manchester with half a crown and a return half in my pocket and I write my name on a piece of paper and I've got two thousand pounds." He rolled the figures forth with a fine gusto; but whether he was serious or was pulling my leg I know not to this day. Reinforced as to our bank account and inspired by our new friend's confidence we took the paper to London.

XLIII

THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

THE first thing that befell us when we got to London was the bitter frost of 1895, and the second was the visit of the Countess of Warwick. In her reminiscences, published thirty-four years later, Lady Warwick gives the following account of her "curious strange adventure."

"There had been a grand ball at the Castle. Of course the ball was a great success, and the newspapers applauded with great enthusiasm, all except one obscure sheet, the *Clarion*. This paper only reached me on the second morning after the ball; and my attention was called to its special article about the ball by an ominous black line. I read with indignation and amazement a violent attack on myself for holding idle junketing in a time of general misery. This 'impertinent rag' said scathingly that ours was a sham benevolence, a frivolous ignoring of real social conditions. I was so angry that the memory of that anger is vivid still. I said to myself that the writer of this article was some crabbed, envious being, who grudged the chance of work to the poor people who had their share of the money spent on the festivities; someone who hated luxury because it was out of his reach.

"In my bitter indignation, I forgot all about my duty to the guests who still lingered. I got up at once, told my maid that I was going to London by

the earliest train, and leaving the Castle without a word of explanation to anyone, I was in Fleet Street by midday searching for the editorial office of the *Clarion*. I found this office at the top of a staircase in one of the older buildings of the street, with the editor's name, Robert Blatchford, on the door. I entered unannounced, and there at his writing-desk sat the man who had dared to attack us for indulging in legitimate amusement that had at the same time given honest work to so many unemployed. His coldly gazing eyes showed no surprise at the unexpected and abrupt vision in his dingy office of a young woman dressed in the height of fashion. He made no movement of welcome. I remembered thinking that the garment he wore, which was something between a dressing-gown and a lounge coat, was most undignified.

"'Are you the editor of the *Clarion*?' I demanded. He merely nodded. 'I came about this,' I went on, thrusting the marked page under his eyes. He made no reply, but his preoccupied eye seemed to hold a question and he waited for me to go on. 'How could you be so unfair, so unjust?' I asked. 'Our ball has given work to half the county, and to dozens of dressmakers in London besides.'

"'Will you sit down,' he replied, 'while I explain to you how mistaken you are about the real effect of luxury?'

"And then Robert Blatchford told me, as a Socialist and a Democrat, what he thought of charity bazaars and ladies bountiful. He made plain to me the difference between productive and unproductive labour. He said that labour used to produce finery was as much wasted as if it were used to dig holes in the ground and fill them up again.

"By this new standard I found that nine-tenths of the money spent on the Warwick Ball had been

wasted. Such elementary economics as that the only useful labour was labour that produced useful articles, which in turn helped labour to produce again, was all new to me. Although I had a vague idea that money spent on champagne and delicacies was wasted, I found that the Blatchford doctrine included the cobwebby lace and similar useless and beautiful things in the same category.

"My old ideas and ideals were brought to naught, and it was late in the afternoon before this plain man with the big ideas had ceased speaking. We had both forgotten the lunch hour and the passing of time.

"Of course I did not grasp all that was poured into my hungry soul, but before the end of the talk I did realize humbly that setting the poor, who themselves needed food and coal and decent housing, to build unnecessary rooms for an evening's enjoyment, to cook dainties for people already overfed, and to make clothes for the rich dancers, was idle work. The great ball, and all its preparations, I found, had not added one iota to the national wealth.

"I was somewhat dazed when at last I left Fleet Street and got to the railway station, where I sat waiting for the train to take me back to Warwick. During the journey home I thought and thought about all that I had been hearing and learning. I knew my outlook on life could never be the same as before the incident. I reached home just as my wondering guests were going in to dinner, and when I joined the party I made no effort to satisfy curiosity and explain my odd absence. I was as one who had found a new, a real world. The crisis I was facing, or had faced, was emotional, and it would have been impossible then to frame such an experience in words. Indeed, it took much hard intellectual effort during several years before I could be said to have intelligently

grasped and become persuaded that Socialism was the only solution to the problem of poverty. I was, however, an apt and ardent pupil. Next day I sent for ten pounds' worth of books on Socialism. I got the name of an old Professor of Economics, and under him I started my period of study without delay. It would be idle to try to follow the circuitous path I trod, but it was Robert Blatchford's honest talk on the memorable day that gave me a vision of how it would be possible to change and modify the unjust conditions of our modern life."

Well, there we have a picture of me and my office and my undignified garment as the Countess of Warwick saw them in 1895. When I read it I was puzzled about the "garment;" but after some hard thinking I remembered it. That undignified garment was a pilot jacket of the best Russian cloth, very warm and soft and comfortable, and I was really rather proud of it. And pride is a sin and I am rebuked. And my coldly gazing eyes misled her ladyship. The fact is I was very nervous and very tired. I had never before spoken to a countess and I did not know how to address or receive her. And I had ridden from Manchester on the midnight train—one of the coldest rides I can remember—and when I reached home in the early morning I found my friend and partner and his wife, who lived next door, in bed with influenza. We had only just moved in, we had no maids and we did not know a doctor. I lit my friends' fire, got them some breakfast, went out and found a doctor, and then set off for London.

Seated in my dingy den, in my undignified garment, I was confronted with a beautiful lady, beautifully dressed, whose obvious intention was to "Trafalgar Square" me. I am naturally shy and I did not feel at all happy during the interview. What we talked about I do not remember. The countess does. I

was very much astonished when she told me, many years later, that what I had said had turned her thoughts to Socialism. "I went," her ladyship said to me, "to Paddington Station and sat on the platform for two hours thinking. I was not used to being talked to like that." So I suppose I must have been a bit of a bear, though I was really trying to be polite. It was not really strange that we should misunderstand each other. The lady thought me cold and unsympathetic; I thought her proud and scornful. Had anyone told me that I had awakened "the hunger of her soul" I should not have believed it. Yet it was not a change of mind only, but a change of heart. The Countess of Warwick was a true sister of Abou Ben Adhem. Something I said showed her a new light. She did not flinch from the startling truth. I think she was very brave.

XLIV

DAMOSELS AND DRAGONS

IN the summer of 1896 Kismet was unkind to the *Clarion* Board. I began with a tandem spill in the Chilterns. My companion, J. D. Sutcliffe, fractured his collar-bone and I compound-fractured my left thumb. A few weeks later, Edward Francis Fay had a cycle spill near the Forest of Wyre and compound-fractured his left elbow. Yet a few weeks later William Ranstead got his foot under the wheel of his trap and had to be put in splints. Still a few weeks later, Mr. Ranstead's pony fell going down a hill and our wives were badly cut and shaken.

When we had all been mended Fay and I went on a walking tour in Ireland. We spent our last night in an hotel at Galway. As we lay in our cots enjoying our final pipes Fay said to me, "It's all very fine, Robert, fighting the good fight of faith on nothing a year, but what will become of us when we are old?" To which I made my usual answer: "Sir, we are in the hands of God."

Three weeks later my dear friend died. After leaving me he went to Scotland and at Edinburgh contracted typhoid fever. I went at once and brought him to Manchester, where Sir William Sinclair took him into his care; but could not save him.

I cannot look back on the year 1896 with any kindness, nor were the closing years of the nineteenth century propitious; but early in the nineteen-

hundreds the sky cleared and I began to make some money out of my books. Now, although I have published many books, a couple of dozen at least, I never wrote a book as a book. I wrote serials and tales and sketches for the *Clarion*, and my published volumes were reprints of that more or less hurried work. I have never written a book as a novelist writes a novel or a historian a history. I have always been a journalist; not an author. And I have never chosen a career. The career chose me. I know that according to Samuel Smiles and other didactic teachers, if one is to succeed one must have singleness of purpose and steadfastness of execution, but we are not all built that way and there is such a thing as fate. My idea, before I got an opening on the Press, was an easy leisured life in the lilled fields of literature. I had a wife and two small children to keep, and I wanted to earn money by writing essays and stories. I got a start, and a very lucky start, and was tripping happily along when I met the dragon.

Concentration and perseverance are fine things. We do well to recommend them to the young; but suppose, when our earnest youth has chosen his career and is making a noise like *Excelsior*, he meets a woman, or a dragon, or both. Is he to blow the woman a kiss and march on; or is he to stop and fight the dragon?

I am not raising idle objections. No, I am thinking of my own experience. I was not, as we say, "out for dragons."

I wanted to get on with my comfortable job. I wanted to devote my time and care to literature. What shall I call my dragon? He was a horror of many shapes and hues. He looked like Poverty, like Injustice, like Greed. Some named him Capitalism. I could not take my mind off him; I thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night.

What was I to do? Ought I, with a fine singleness of purpose, to have ignored the monster and his victims and spent laborious hours, days, years, in the effort to become a popular novelist? I could not do that. I say I could not. The thought of the women and the children enraged me. I had to fight the dragon. Career or no career, success or no success, I had to try the issue out.

And it was no swift and sudden battle. It meant war. You remember the slogan of Carlyle's old professor: "The cause of the poor, in heaven's name and hell's." The slums! Socialism! Labour! When after twenty years of slogging I drew off from the stricken field to get breath and lick my wounds I found that I was too old to start a career. And there were other causes, and for another ten years I lived, as one may express it, from hand to mouth, fighting now against one wrong and now against another.

And I think very many young men are like that. They will be real triers, if they like their job; but they will not plod on in a rut when love or pity turns their blood to wine. To follow a career with zeal and devotion, that is well; but not when we hear the children crying. And, suppose a youth, well into his stride on the golden road to Samarkand, happens to fall in love, and cannot afford to marry. Is he to leave the girl and lose her—for the sake of a career? Oh, Diaphenia, white as the lilies, how I do love thee! But this bucket-shop is a whole-time job. Good-bye, sweetest of flower maidens. Success is a jealous master.

My gallant fellows, hearts of gold, what career would atone for such a cowardly failure, what success were worth a price so fatal? I married at twenty-nine on thirty shillings a week, and I would not have given up my sweetheart, nor would give up her

memory, to be crowned King of Jupiter and all his moons. When I think of success there has to be a woman in it, and children and friends, and a conscience that tells me if I have done little good I have had a big try. This accounts for the fact that I have never had a career.

I am wondering, then, what the successful career-makers, with their undeviating purpose and infinite capacity for taking pains, would have done if at a turn of the road they had seen a dragon ravaging on his prey. If their seated hearts had knocked at their ribs, and all their manhood had gone up in a flame. If one can buy success for much labour and great pains, it may be a good bargain; but one might pay too dear.

XLV

REASON AND THE REDS

I HAVE no reason to love the fiery Tybalts of the Communist party and they have dissembled their love for me. Indeed, one of them spoke brotherly of me as "the world's greatest traitor and the traitor most accursed," and, queerly enough, it is just that violence of language for which I would offer a few words of excuse. Like Katisha, I would ask mercy, "mercy even for Ko-Ko." A normal member of the House of Commons accused the Red speakers of self-righteousness. He did not know. That is not the source of their indignation. No human man who has come into close contact with the horrors of poverty, overcrowding and unemployment can retain his sang-froid. The experience is harassing. And the man who has endured the pain and humiliation of a long strike or lock-out, or the Gethsemane of unemployment, and has known his wife and children to be starving while he was helpless, is either more or less than a man if he is not roused to mutiny. I remember one grey-haired gentle lady, not a politician, whom I escorted through some of the slums, used the identical words Anatole France puts into the mouth of the young telegraphist, Clair: "That town ought to be destroyed." Mad words? Yes; but it is rather a mad world. I must in honesty confess that during the years I spent in "the shadow of the ragged stone" my language was not always gracefully sedate. In-

deed, I was more than a teeny bit ferocious. If those who so unctuously condemn the comminatory eloquence of the Reds would spend even a little time amongst *les miserables* they would understand.

I need not say, I hope, that I never made the blunder of preaching or thinking revolution. In the first weeks after I publicly declared for Socialism I had to fight a verbal duel with the Reds, or, as they were then called, the Anarchists. I hold to-day the convictions I held then. I believe Socialism is a good system for Socialists and that revolution is political insanity.

The oratory of the British anti-British Reds leaves too much to the imagination. What is behind that blessed shibboleth "The dictatorship of the proletariat"? It means that all the trained ability of the professions and the commercial and industrial and scientific afterguard is to be replaced by commissars chosen from the manual workers. That is to say, the efficient are to make way for the non-efficient. And this change is to benefit the working classes. But will the working men believe that untried and untrained rebels will be able to overthrow the Empire and then rebuild it near to the heart's desire? What have the Red leaders done to inspire confidence in their genius and stability? Have they proved themselves the super-men they needs must be to win a revolution and build up upon the ruins a secure and prosperous commonwealth?

And after the crash and before recovery could begin, how would the other Powers comport themselves: Germany, for instance, or Russia? As a taxpayer and a parent I should like these and other questions answered before I go out and shoot the doctor and pole-axe the vicar and burn down the local bank.

Be we never so angry, be we never so sorry, the

MY EIGHTY YEARS

mills of the gods grind slowly, and they will not grind the better if we try to hasten them with dynamite. I will not say "this town should be destroyed;" but I will say that the ignorant greed and stupid prejudice which built the town and stand in the way of its redemption should be exposed and held up to derision. There ought not to be such a thing as poverty in any civilized country, and though the policy of the Reds is wrong their impatience is pardonable and natural.

XLVI

THE DRUMS OF WAR

IN the autumn of 1909 I was asked by the foreign editor of the *Daily Mail* to attend the German Army manœuvres and to follow that service by visits to several of the principal German cities. Before I finished these commissions I was called home to attend the British Army manœuvres at Swindon.

In the following year I did the French Army manœuvres in Picardy and the British Army manœuvres on Salisbury Plain, both for the *Daily Mail*, so that I saw the three armies at work. There was nothing in these experiences that would interest the general reader, and I mention them because they had an indirect bearing on what followed. The then foreign editor of the *Daily Mail* is an old friend of mine, and when I wanted to get a warning of the German menace in a popular paper I was fortunate in securing his help.

Charles Lamb, meeting a pompous-looking stranger in the street, asked him politely: "Pray, sir, are you anyone in particular?" I have sometimes wished I might put the same question to some eminent persons. I mean, does the successful politician or author commonly think of himself as the brilliant statesman or novelist, or does he, in his own mind, keep his personality and his work distinct from each other? I can say for myself that I have never thought of myself as a publicist or journalist, or

author. I have never been to myself *The Robert Blatchford* of social or political controversy. In my own mind I am always simply "me." In the midst of the work I am *in* the work and think of it only. My ego drops out of sight and mind. Things have to be said and I say them. Having said them I retire from the dust and noise and am once more "me." That is to say I am the little wondering child, the clinging husband and father, the grateful happy friend; the brush-maker's apprentice, the care-free young sergeant of the Fusiliers. Fame and money and power have no attraction for that "me." Nature filled me up with love and forgot the ambition. I had no desire for the limelight and never sought the patronage of the panjandrums. I was happy at home with my wife and children, or out with a few good pals. Great political issues did not interest me, unless they threatened our own people. I preferred the cricket news, or a good new book. I am, in fact, an ordinary domestic animal with an inbred hatred of injustice and a kind of fierce pity for all unfortunate and unhappy creatures, especially women and children. As for Robert Blatchford, he is a fighting dog; but he is not "me." This may seem an indecently egotistic writing; but it is necessary if the reader is to understand the true inwardness of what follows.

I don't remember when it was I first realized the menace of the pan-German "world policy." I first wrote about it in the *Clarion*; but I alienated our own readers without reaching the general public. The danger was so obvious and drew so perilously near. It worried me. I could not forget it. I would lie awake at night and think: "My God! This horror is marching steadily upon us and our people will not believe it." The Naval and Military writers had their eyes open; but their warning was

unheeded. The deluded civilians had an answer ready: "He's a soldier. War's his trade." It was useless to point out that if war caught us unprepared nearly all those "fight-thirsty" soldiers would be killed. Our statesmen did not know, or dared not speak. Our politicians were obsessed with politics. Most of our popular newspapers were twittering about universal peace and the burden of armaments. The country was drugged with dangerous delusions. The service papers and the *Clarion* had no public audience. I was getting desperate. Someone must get a hearing. I felt bound and muzzled.

At last, one evening, towards the end of 1909, as I sat by the fire with my pipe, thinking, thinking, thinking, the idea suddenly took shape in my mind: "The *Daily Mail*. Why not try the *Daily Mail*?" I jumped up—my wife wondered what had bitten me—ran upstairs and called my friend Fenton Macpherson, the *Daily Mail's* foreign editor, over the telephone and made an offer to write a series of articles on the German menace without payment. I said I did not want payment. I would rather do the work for love. I did not care whether I signed them or not; but I wanted to get the public ear. Macpherson promised to see the editor and let me know. Later he rang up to say Lord Northcliffe was away and that Mr. Kennedy Jones, who was in charge, would like to see me in the morning.

Kennedy Jones agreed with me as to the danger and said the *Daily Mail* would give me a fair show. I told him I did not want payment and if he preferred to have the articles written by one of his own staff I would give him all the data. At that he smiled. "No," he said, "if we do it, they'll say we have an axe to grind. They cannot say that about you." But Macpherson knew better. He said: "You are sure to get it in the neck and you ought to be paid."

It was agreed that I should state my case in ten articles of 1,500 words, and Macpherson, who was always for speed, said he should like the complete thing delivered in three days. That meant 15,000 words. I spent the first day on selection and arrangement, wrote 5,000 words on the second day and finished off with 10,000 on the third day. The copy was punctually delivered. Then Kennedy Jones began to realize what "they" could say when they were trying.

It was a scare. It was a stunt. It was a political trick meant to injure the Liberal Party at the election. The Right Honourable David Lloyd George published an imaginary conversation between Lord Northcliffe and me. Lord Northcliffe, the Rt. Hon. Gentleman said, sent for me to work up a war scare. When he had explained I said: "Yes, but where do I come in?" And his lordship answered: "Leave that to us." I pointed out to the Right Honourable David Lloyd George that his story was untrue. The offer had come from me to the *Daily Mail*. Lord Northcliffe had not seen me. Lord Northcliffe was in Nova Scotia at the time. I had not asked anyone what I was to get out of it; but had refused payment. The Right Honourable David Lloyd George did not apologize and did not defend the statement. Having struck his blow beneath the belt he very cleverly "got down to avoid." I was not surprised. I regarded the Rt. Hon. Gentleman at that time as an unscrupulous political charlatan and I have not at any time since seen cause to alter my opinion.

Mr. McKenna said the Tory Party had engaged the services of a Socialist writer to start a war scare; but, he added proudly, "it has not lost us a single vote." That is what Mr. McKenna was troubled about—votes. An Englishman warns the country of an impending attack on the Empire by a federation

of powerful armed states and an intelligent Cabinet Minister answers complacently that the warning has not cost his party a single vote.

Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., announced that "the whole Socialist movement was rocking with suppressed laughter" over my ridiculous blunder.

The *Manchester Guardian*, the *Westminster Gazette* and other myopic organs were vastly entertained by my ridiculous antics and buttered "that great sovereign and true friend of England, the Kaiser."

The Germans said very little. They were busy finishing the enlargement of the Kiel Canal. But one haughty aristocrat, whose name I have forgotten, did allude to the contemptible agitation instituted by the "Ex-brushmaker." Meanwhile the ex-brushmaker supported the demand of the Navy League for fifty million for destroyers and for the completion of the Naval base at Rosyth. None of these requests was conceded and, indeed, only a few months before the outbreak of war, Mr. Lloyd George declared that not for twenty years had there been so great an opportunity to reduce our armaments.

I find it difficult at this time to believe that our statesmen were as blind and feeble as they seemed. The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, speaking during the early days of the war, said that the Government had guessed wrongly and some others had guessed rightly and "were entitled to boast of it for ever." He seemed to think a reasoned forecast of events, based upon overwhelming evidence, was in the nature of a gamble, like the backing of a horse. But there never was a more glaring instance of being unable to see the wood for the trees. A statesman's business is not to guess; but to inquire and investigate and think.

Viscount Grey, if I have not misread his book on the war, implies that the Cabinet were conscious of

the danger; but were afraid to speak or take precautions for fear of precipitating hostilities. So they kept the country in the dark until Germany was ready to pounce.

Now, what did we ask for, those of us who realized the situation? We asked for more super-dreadnoughts, and when the war came we had to build them hand over fist. We asked for a secure Naval base in the North Sea, and when the war came our Grand Fleet had to dodge about in the darkness in danger of mines and submarines. One fine battleship, the *Audacious*, was sunk by a mine. We asked for more destroyers, and late in the war our shortness of destroyers compelled us to rely upon American help against the U-boat campaign. I personally asked that a few heavy guns be mounted in hidden batteries on the East coast, and these guns would have served us well in the German raids on Scarborough and the Hartlepoons. I pointed out that when the Kiel Canal had been widened the German Fleet could retire to the Baltic or sally into the North Sea at will, thus gaining the choice of time and circumstance for attack. A strategic advantage which caused us much anxiety during the war.

But besides the ridicule and abuse of the Peace Party and the Labour Party I had to face the objections of the Blue Water School. The Blue Water School protested that an overseas army did not matter. All we needed for victory was a close blockade and the security of the seas. They could not, or would not, see that no fleet could prevent the German armies from marching through Belgium.

Now in the *Daily Mail* articles I pointed out that to hold the Belgian frontier we needed half a million trained troops, ready to mobilize at an hour's notice, and, I added, "a million would be better." I have only learned since the death of M. Clemenceau

that he came over to see Sir Edward Grey some years before the war, and that he said a hundred thousand British troops could only check the German advance through Belgium and that to defeat such attack at least half a million would be needed.

What happened? We sent 80,000 and followed with such reinforcements as we could rake together. These men were sacrificed while the Territorials were making ready. Then came the first hundred thousand of Kitchener's men, and so it went on for the first years of the war; we were suffering heavy losses on the Western Front, because we were always outnumbered there. We were virtually offering the enemy every chance to beat us in detail. The short-sighted counsels of the pre-war Peace Party cost us very dear.

Even in the last year of the war the great German March offensive nearly brought us to disaster because Mr. Lloyd George obstinately refused the reinforcements needed and asked for. And that at a time when England was teeming with trained men in khaki. It is a great mistake to allow a civilian Minister to meddle with military operations in the field.

Somewhere towards the end of the war my old friend and partner, A. M. Thompson, commented upon an article in a French journal. I quote the passage as it appeared:

Blatchford's famous pamphlet on the German Menace has been translated into French and has attracted the attention of the great Paris daily, *La Liberté*, which inquires whether he is still alive to see the realization of the events which he foretold five years ago "in terms of a precision positively stupendous." The French writer follows Blatchford step by step through his forecast, and shows how exactly it preceded the event; the most surprising feature of the prediction to the Frenchman being its anticipation of the German struggle for the Channel ports and the fact that "this prodigious writer even predicted, in effect, that the Fleet would be reduced to inaction in the first month of the fight. The question will be settled on land. An army will

be needed." The *Liberté* article concludes with the exclamation: "How right he was! What a view! What a prophet!"

As the saying is, "a prophet is not without honour save in his own party and in his own House of Commons."

And that, I think, is all it is needful to say as to my part in the Great War Scare of 1909. But no. There is an amusing incident worth telling. In 1910 a noble lord, his name I don't remember, wrote suggesting that the Navy League might with advantage publish my pamphlet on the German menace, "if they could get it rewritten in a less illiterate style." I have always regretted that this nobleman did not give us his paraphrase of my illiterate style. And then—shortly afterwards—the president of the Navy League wrote to say I had been elected a member of the committee of the Navy League and to apologize for electing me without asking my consent. I attended one meeting of the Navy League Committee, and a few days later the secretary rang me up to say that *The Times* had made some uncomplimentary remarks about my heretical views on theology, in consequence whereof a duke, a lady of title and a mere mister had warned the secretary that if I remained a member of the committee they would leave the League. I thanked the secretary over the 'phone, went sedately home, refrained from biting my children and read the story of Tom Smart for the—say, the hundred and first time. The connexion between the Thirty-nine Articles and the building of battleships eluded me.

About this time I had some correspondence with Lord Roberts. He wanted me to appeal to the working men to take heed of the growing danger. I told him that was quite useless and that the only man in England who could gain the attention of the country was the King.

Lord Roberts agreed with me and promised to

see the King. But the King was taken ill and died.

And on the day of the King's funeral I was taken ill, at Lyme Regis, and very nearly died too. I had my wife with me or I should have died. And a few days later, after we had reached Exmouth and had a good lunch and some champagne, I felt that I had died and had come to life again.

The *Daily Mail* articles brought an avalanche of correspondence. The letters used to be sent on to me by parcels post. They came from all kinds and classes of people, all over the world. It was impossible to read them. I sorted out those which looked important, but when they filled a Gladstone bag I gave up in despair. Ultimately, during a change of dwellings, I lost the bag and all its treasures, among which were letters from Lord Roberts and an amazing statement from a member of the Russian Secret Service. As far as I could gather from a hasty scanning of this correspondence, the general impression of the writers was to the effect that I had rendered a great public service. I ought to have sent the Gladstone bag on to the Navy League, but the idea never occurred to me. Meanwhile the *Daily Mail* insisted on paying me for the articles and sent a cheque for £150 for the ten articles.

XLVII

WAR

IN August, 1910, the Navy League having no further need of my services, and the country and the Government, still muttering about the burden of armaments, having gone to sleep again, I retired to my cottage in Norfolk, next door to Lowerson's School, where I coached the boys at cricket and played the gramophone for the girls to dance and had a lazy time. It was a mixed school for girls and boys working together, and for the benefit of those who regard mixed schools with mixed feelings I will relate one suggestive episode. The cricket team having won all their matches in one season, I and one of the parents invited them to a supper and announced that each boy could bring a girl. A few hours later a deputation of two waited upon me. The spokesman said: "The team have sent us to ask you, Mr. Blatchford, if we are forced to bring girls to the supper?" I swallowed a smile and made answer: "What we propose, my son, is that each boy should have the honour of inviting a lady." The deputation then "retired in dudgeon." When the banquet was spread the boys marched in and filled one table and the girls tripped in and filled the other. Throughout the meal the two tables studiously ignored each other. And yet most of those boys and girls have since married. We old ones used to speak of the affair as "the cat and dog

dinner." Both members of the deputation married young.

We had good fun with the cricket. I remember one match some of us veterans played against the school team. We had six or seven old dug-outs and filled up with small boys. We began well, gaining a lead of thirty on the first innings. We then adjourned for tea. As we walked across to the school our captain remarked that we had done very well. I said, "Yes, but we are licked." "What?" said the captain. "Why, we are thirty to the good." "Yes," I said, "but we are licked. There's a second innings." My judgment proved correct. After tea the old crocks were lazy and stiff, while the boys danced out, full of bread and jam and the joy of life, and did handsprings down the pitch. Naturally the young imps climbed all over us. We could neither bowl nor field, and I believe our total was nine runs and a bye.

A couple of years later, I, being in my sixty-third year, discovered that I had a heart. We were playing a sides game and I went on to bowl the first over. It was a blazing July afternoon. I sent down a good-length ball with some off break and the batsman played it, looking rather anxious. Then, as I walked back from the crease, I found I was somewhat out of breath. After the second ball I was so much out of breath that I had to finish the over underhand. I began to wonder what pneumonia felt like, and as I crossed over to field at mid-off I laid my hand on my chest. My heart was going like a trip hammer. I felt as if I had a ball of wool in my throat. So that was the way of it? Heart! A few minutes later a substitute was fielding at mid-off and I was sitting under a walnut tree in the shade. That was my last cricket match. Heigho! Alas, the while.

And then it came. I was going north, to Scot-

land or Yorkshire (I forget), and opposite me in the compartment there was a lady. On her left hand were two male friends. One of them who was reading a newspaper said: "I say. It looks bad. What?" and the lady answered: "Yes. I begin to think Blatchford was right." I had not seen the morning paper: but I guessed what the trouble was. A few days later Germany declared war.

At this point, enter my old friend Macpherson. Would I write for the *Weekly Dispatch* a whole page weekly about the war. That meant seven columns, about 10,000 words. A large order. But I wanted to write about the war. Thought I might be useful. Yes—the salary was handsome. I accepted. My first article was written during the retreat from Mons. Before the Marne. Von Kluck was marching on Paris. The French Government had fled to Bordeaux. Everyone thought Paris must fall. I had run up to London. I spread the maps on the floor. I recalled the French manœuvres of 1910 in which the plan of campaign included the advance of a Parisian army on the German flank. I noted the long extension of the German line. I measured and thought and thought again, and at the end of my first article I said I would hazard a guess that the Germans were in a dangerous position and would never reach Paris at all. And I was right. And with all due modesty I think it is fair to myself to claim that I was the only writer who dared to make that prophecy. There, excuse my blushes. I shall not boast again, but considering the ridicule and abuse and misrepresentations to which I had been subjected I think I am justified in pointing out that I was right from first to last along the whole line.

It was about this time that the canard started about the landing of Russian troops in England. A friend of mine, in Birmingham—I will call him Mr. Blank

—wrote to me to the effect that he had talked with a British officer who had been present at the landing. That awakened my journalistic instinct and I wired, asking for names of ports of arrival. My friend did not answer, but next day there was a ring, and I went to the door and found a well-dressed, good-looking man who asked if I was Mr. Blatchford. I said I was and asked what I could do for him. He said: "Well, I may as well tell you, I'm police." I took him into the drawing-room and gave him a chair. He took off his hat, sat down, produced a notebook, coughed and said: "You are not an Englishman, Mr. Blatchford." Having assimilated this surprising information I answered, "Is that so? I was born in Kent, my father was born in Devonshire, my mother was born in London, I have lived in England all my life. I am a journalist on a London paper and I have served seven years in the British Army. What do you call me: an Armenian?"

The young man said: "You have foreign neighbours."

I answered: "The only person I know in Herne Hill is the lady next door, who is the wife of a British Naval Officer on service in the North Sea."

The young man said: "You know a man in Birmingham. A Mr. J. G. Blank."

"Yes," I answered, "he's a very old friend of mine."

"Is he a foreigner?" the young man asked.

I said: "I should not like to tell him so." And then I guessed the reason for this amusing inquiry. The police had stopped my wire about the Russians and had jumped to the conclusion that I was a German spy. I explained the matter to the young policeman, who sat for some time pondering deeply. At last he said: "Well, Mr. Blatchford, I might, perhaps, go as far as to say that this inquiry may possibly have

some relation to the facts stated by you." He then looked at me in a dubious way and coughed.

As he did not seem able to get any forrarder I produced a copy of the *Weekly Dispatch* and a copy of my pamphlet on England and Germany and said: "Give these to your superintendent with my compliments and I think he will understand."

The young man glanced at the newspaper and picked up the pamphlet. He rose at once. "Oh," he said, "you are *that* Mr. Blatchford. Well, I'm proud to meet you, sir. You will understand. We have to look into things. I'm sorry to have troubled you."

I said I was glad to know the police were keeping a sharp look-out and he had not troubled me at all. So we shook hands and parted. But had he met my little wife instead of me and suggested that her husband was a German spy he would have found the interview more stimulating.

What astonished me more than anything else was the failure of the country to recognize the gravity of the danger and the magnitude of the task confronting us. This was exemplified in the silly slogan: "Business as usual;" in the exclamation of a soldier in France when told that football had been suspended: "What, no football? Christ! This is a war," and in the incredulous surprise which greeted Lord Kitchener's prediction that the war would last for years and his call for 500,000 men. The public did not realize the danger of submarine attacks on our Fleet in the North Sea; they seemed unconscious of the precarious position of Sir John French's "contemptible little army," with the French retreating on their right (and very properly retreating) and the Germans, with overwhelming forces of men and guns, endeavouring to encircle them; they had no anxiety about the Channel ports, they did not think

of American sensitiveness about the naval blockade, they had a confidence in Russian power which I did not share, they had never estimated the tremendous might of two armed nations, they had no suspicion of Turkey's designs, nor of the course which fear might drive neutral powers to pursue. All those tragic possibilities pressed upon me like a nightmare and I had to conceal my anxiety and show a cheerful front. I watched the young men and girls on the sea promenades walking, laughing, listening to the bands, and wondered what was in store for them. I saw the men streaming into the recruiting stations in the parks and the reservists pouring into Aldershot and remembered what I had read of wars and what I had seen in Germany and France. I was disturbed by the general air of cheerfulness, the unconsciousness of danger, the absence of any bitterness or anger. The horrors of war and the malignity of the enemy were not yet present in the public mind. I was very anxious.

In September, 1914, while the desperate battles were being fought around the Ypres salient, I happened to be in Waterloo Station when the Second Scots Guards entrained for the front.

They marched into Waterloo Station with their band playing "Tipperary," and the crowd sang. I looked with a heavy heart, knowing what those splendid men were marching to.

I had just seen a fine draft of public-school recruits leave for training when I heard a drum. I have a keen ear for a drum at all times, but in war-time—a drum!

The drum came nearer and nearer. Presently we heard the side drums and the fifes. Then the police began to clear the road. The crowd heaved and swarmed and bristled with excitement. The drums stopped. We heard the rhythmic tramp of feet.

People climbed on trucks and barriers, on crates and barrels and barrows. The band struck up. A feathered bonnet appeared above the heads of the crowd. A buzz went round. "It's the Guards. It's the Scots Guards. The Guards! There they are!" Suddenly the crowd began to cheer. They threw up great hurrahs, which made the glass roof of the station ring. The band marched in. It was, as I have said, playing "Tipperary." I saw a handsome officer on a horse. Then the sloped rifles: the brown, grim rifles I knew so well of old, and the crowd burst into song: "It's a long way to Tipperary: it's a long way to go." Instantly the surroundings seemed to group themselves into a picture.

Away on the coast the troopship waited on the tide; yet farther away the French trains were being shunted into the sidings; farther yet, as the sunlight streamed into Waterloo Station and the band crashed and the crowd sang "Tipperary," the guns were booming, the shells were bursting, the battle was being fought; the deadly desperate battle these smiling men were marching to.

In the station the crowd stood singing, louder and louder, as the Guards marched with the sun shining on their bronzed, honest boy faces. Farther away, on the platform, was a group of five officers: men as lithe and clean as greyhounds; men with regular features and firm mouths; men alert, and proud, and cool.

Perched up on a barrier, held by a mother's hand, was a baby girl with flaxen curls, who, with her slim arm raised and her lips smiling, waved a tiny handkerchief. Farther back, thrown up in sharp relief against the shadow, a mounted orderly was drinking beer from a bottle handed to him by a sailor, and close in front of me, a note to make the picture perfect, a young man had lifted his young wife up,

so that as she sat upon his shoulder, with one hand clasped about his neck. She was a small, trim girl with a pleasant, pretty face. She wore a blue silk knitted jersey and a knitted blue silk cap. The sun picked her out like a theatre limelight as the sloping rifles moved steadily past her. Her lips were compressed, her nostrils dilated, her eyes shone like blue fire. And so, in an atmosphere of admiration, sympathy, and excitement, the Second Scots Guards, a splendid regiment of splendid men, marched to the train.

Four weeks later, after the desperate fighting for the Kruseik trenches, the Second Scots Guards were moved back into reserve mustering only 450.

Our people know now what war means; they know the awful cost. But on that bright autumn morning I wonder how many of the marching men and the cheering crowd shared my sad prevision. I say again I was puzzled by the quiet cheerfulness of soldiers and people. I did not understand it. To me it seemed alarming.

XLVIII

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE

JUST after the Battle of the Marne, Lord Northcliffe suggested that I should go over to France. He lent me a very pleasant young man, Mr. Walen, who was a good French scholar, and we put up at an hotel near the promenade, in Dieppe. Before we started I had to attend at the Foreign Office to get my passport stamped. I have told this story before, in a book now out of print; but it is worth telling again.

It was a clear bleak day. The white sunshine lighted up the old portraits on the walls, portraits of dead celebrities, painted by dead artists. There were some ten or twelve persons in the room. In front of me were a French lady and a nun. The French lady had a delicate aquiline nose, full red lips and stabbing black eyes. She was nervous, excited and very much alive. "Haw! Ha!" The keen-faced, calm official at the window tapped his large white teeth with the handle of his pen. "Your husband is at the front, madame?"

"Yes, yes," said madame, "and my children are alone in Paris, and our business—it will be ruined." The official stamped the papers.

The nun moved forward. She was tall and slim, with faded hair and faded cheeks and eyes. Grief and maceration had drenched out of her all fire and colour, all vanity and desire. She was pure and

selfless as a winter cloud. Her pale lips set in a pale smile won at the cost of thought and tears. It made me think of the smile on a dead face.

The official took the papers from her delicate thin hands and glanced over them with a wrinkling of the brows. He looked up and said gently: "Brussels? I'm afraid it is impossible." The tall nun, fair and calm as a waning moon, answered in soft even tones, "Pardon me, the matter is urgent. Please, please assist me."

The official frowned thoughtfully. "But, madame," he protested, "Brussels is in the hands of the enemy. All the country between Brussels and Antwerp is a welter of savage fighting. The railways are all torn up, the bridges are destroyed. The Germans—you know their reputation. It is not fit for you to go there. It is not safe."

"But, sir," said the nun, "I left some of my school children in Brussels before the war. They cannot stay there. I must fetch them, I must go to them."

The official shook his head. "I cannot prevent you," he said. "I can only advise you. You would incur great danger; terrible danger."

The nun said, with a quiet sweetness: "It is my duty." The two regarded each other gravely. The official stamped the papers.

Then the official turned to me. "Morning, Blatchford. Going across? What could one do with a case such as that?"

"Do?" I said. "The dear lady's unanswerable. Duty! Death and danger mean nothing to a woman like that. She'll go and I believe she'll come back."

"I hope so," said the official, and as he took some papers from a huge florid Dutchman, he sighed.

As we sat at breakfast in the Dieppe hotel I could see into the bar and I saw the manageress was crying. The waiter, in answer to Walen's discreet inquiries,

said that news had just come in that the Germans had broken through the French line some thirty miles away and were marching on Dieppe. Walen looked at me with his tranquil smile and asked, "What do we do now?" I said, "We comfort the lady, and pay our bill. You attend to those things while I pack our bags and get a taxi."

Walen discharged his duties with his customary efficiency and as we drove away asked if I thought the message was true. I said: "I think not; but I don't know, and if the Germans do roll into Dieppe before we roll out of it our papers will be our death warrant."

"Why?" asked Walen.

"Why? Robert Blatchford and the *Daily Mail*. They would say we had fired at them and they'd stand us up against the nearest wall."

Walen nodded and puffed at his cigarette. "There's a train for Havre in fifteen minutes," he said, "but it's not a good train. Inconvenient for lunch."

Lunch! he was a cool customer that boy.

The next morning, as we waited at Le Havre station for the Rouen train, we met a young English Tommy in hospital blue. Asked was he wounded, he said: "No. Got a touch of fever on the retreat and they shoved me back here for a week, dammit—I shall miss all the fun."

"What," I said, "do you call war fun?"

The little chap smiled all over his jolly face and answered: "Rather! Finest sport in the world."

He meant it, too, for later, looking at a picture in a home paper of the ruins about Hill 60, I saw, in the centre of a group looking through a broken wall, our little friend of the East Surreys. He was hatless with his tunic unbuttoned and was beaming as happily as if his side had just scored the winning goal in a cup-tie. I hope he is somewhere smiling still.

A boy who regards the battle of Loos as sport should make good in any walk of life.

There was nothing of interest about our stay in Rouen, except the manner of our leaving. The commandant, a fierce-looking colonel with white moustaches, refused to visé our passports until we had our portraits taken. For once Walen's smile faded out. "Hang it," he said, "we shall be stuck here for forty-eight hours."

Then I had an idea. I said: "No. You speak French. Go and book two seats for Paris. No one will ask any questions. There will be a crowd on the platform. We will board the train, and there is nothing to show we are not Frenchmen on business." And it was so. In a few hours we were in Paris. We drove to the Hôtel Petersburg and found it was converted into a hospital. We tried another hotel with the same result. Finally we got in at the Hôtel Grande near the Opera House, where they did us very well.

There was one happening in that hotel which puzzled me. At a table next to mine sat two elderly Frenchmen and a young private of French infantry. The soldier was telling the civilians of some fighting in which he had been engaged. The Germans attacked the trench in which he was and leapt upon the defenders. French reserves ran up and leapt upon the Germans. "It was," said the young soldier, "hell let loose, and I was on the ground floor." Now why were those three Frenchmen carrying on their conversation in English? I have never been able to explain that mystery.

One morning, Lord Northcliffe drove us out to the hospital at Versailles to see the wounded. No useful purpose would be served by revealing what we saw. Walen did not smile. I don't think our little comrade of Havre and Hill 60 would have found any sport in those tragic rooms.

MY EIGHTY YEARS

On our return to Folkestone we witnessed the arrival of the last boat-load of Belgian refugees to escape from Ostend. At Waterloo those poor creatures, the men downcast, the women in tears, sat in groups along the walls with their poor bundles beside them. Homeless in a foreign land. There also, there was no sign or hint of sport.

I found my wife and children safe in their comfortable home and I remembered a line in one of the London papers: "One Socialist writer did more to prevent the weakening of the British Navy than all the Navy League." What would have been our fate in 1914 had our Navy failed us?

XLIX

WHO CAUSED THE WAR?

WHO caused the war? Who caused the war between Prussia and Denmark in 1864? Who caused the war between Prussia and Austria in 1866? Who caused the war between Prussia and France in 1871? Bismarck.

One of the oft-repeated charges against Britain is the German charge that King Edward "ringed her in with hostile alliances." What are the facts?

Germany and Austria made their alliance in 1879. Italy joined in 1882. From 1882 till 1914 the Triple Alliance was in being.

In 1904, eight years after the Franco-Russian alliance, came the Anglo-French *entente*. That was twenty-five years after the Austro-German alliance.

In 1907 the Anglo-Russian *entente* was signed. Thus the alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was made twenty-five years before the *entente* of Russia, France and Britain.

Britain and her Allies, Russia and France, had been faced by the Triple Alliance for a quarter of a century before they began to "ring in Germany" with their alliances.

In 1864, when Austria and Prussia attacked Denmark, Britain remained neutral. This was due to Queen Victoria, who overruled Lord Palmerston, although that sharp-sighted statesman pointed out

that Prussia wanted Kiel as a naval base. Thus we gave Germany her Kiel Canal.

In 1899 we gave Germany Heligoland: her most valuable fortress.

Immediately afterwards, the Kaiser tried to make a secret alliance with Russia and France against us. Our Government knew of this ten years before this war, but remained friendly to Germany.

From 1899 to 1914 the Kaiser and the German Press and German public men carried on a studied campaign of violent abuse and threats against Britain.

The British Government and people remained calm and friendly.

In 1900 Germany passed a Navy Bill voting immense sums for naval purposes. The preamble of this Bill was a threat to Britain.

Our Government and people remained calm and friendly, and the few naval men and soldiers who hinted of the coming danger were laughed at by the public and snubbed by Ministers.

In 1904 came the Dogger Bank affair. The British Fleet was mobilized; but the cloud passed. Germany was not ready. The British people never turned a hair.

In the same year the Kaiser tried to trick Russia into a Russo-German alliance against Britain.

In 1910 Russia and France having consented to the building of the Bagdad Railway, Britain followed suit.

It was for this railway that Germany attacked Serbia, and risked the war. But Britain never thought of making war, although the Bagdad Railway was a machine-gun pointed at her head.

In 1911 Germany built strategic (military) railways up to the Belgian frontier. Our Government remained friendly.

In the same year Bernhardt and Tannenberg issued books telling the world that Germany intended to

attack France and Britain and make a bid for "World Power or Downfall." Nobody in Britain took the slightest notice.

In 1912 Germany ordered Holland to fortify the Dutch port of Flushing. Against whom? Against Britain.

Our Government remained calm and friendly and our people never noticed the hostile and threatening act. This was the year of the Haldane mission.

Lord Haldane was rudely snubbed. But our people never heard a word about it, and our Government, who were now alive to the danger, told the country that "we had never been on better terms with Germany."

In the face of all those signs of hostility and of coming war; in the face of all those threats and insults and gross provocations, our Government and our people never showed a sign of anger; never uttered a thought of war.

Finally, we all knew that not one soul in Britain wanted war, that only a few believed that war was likely, and that those who tried to give warning were looked upon as fools.

When the British Government suggested a Naval Truce with Germany, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg answered:

"When a people will not, or cannot, continue to spend enough on its armaments to be able to make its way in the world, then it falls back into the second rank and sinks down to the rôle of a 'super' on the world's stage. There will always be another and a stronger there who is ready to take the place it has vacated. The condition of peacefulness is strength; the old saying still holds good that the weak will be the prey of the strong."

That insolent speech could only mean one thing. It meant "fight or get under."

In 1898 Rear-Admiral von Goetzen, a close friend of the Kaiser, met Admiral Dewey at Manila, and said to him:

"You will not believe me, but in about fifteen years my country will begin to war. At the end of two months we shall hold Paris; but that will only form one step towards our real goal—the overthrow of England. Every event will happen exactly at its proper time, for we shall be ready and our enemies will not." That statement was sent by Admiral Dewey to the U.S. Government, who kept it until America came into the war.

Everything that Rear-Admiral von Goetzen said fits in with the conduct of Germany for years before the war.

In 1911 Germany built railways up to the Belgian frontier.

In 1912 Germany made the Dutch fortify Flushing.

In 1912 Germany raised a war levy of 50 million pounds.

In 1912 Germany increased her standing army by 544,000 men.

In 1913 the Kaiser told the King of the Belgians that war with France was "inevitable, and close at hand."

On the 6th of November, 1913, says Baron von Beyens, the Belgian minister at the Court of Berlin, von Moltke, Chief of the German General Staff, said that war with France was sure to come soon "and insisted emphatically on the certain prospect of success in view of the enthusiasm with which the whole German nation would gird up its loins to beat back the traditional foe."

In May, 1913, von Moltke said: "We must throw overboard all the stock commonplaces about the responsibility of the aggressor. As soon as there is a ten-to-one chance in favour of war, we must fore-

WHO CAUSED THE WAR?

stall our opponent, commence hostilities without more ado, and mercilessly crush all resistance."

In July, 1914, the Germans finished the widening of the Kiel Canal.

In August, 1914, Germany declared war.

Mr. Gerard, the American Ambassador at Berlin, says: "Illuminating figures may be seen in the gold purchase of the German Imperial Bank: in 1911, 174,000,000 marks (shillings); in 1912, 173,000,000 marks; in 1913, 317,000,000 marks.

In 1911, there were published two very important German books: "Germany and the Next War," by General von Bernhardt, and the book by Tannenberg, which lays bare the whole German plot for world conquest.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, says Baron von Beyens: "Herr Ballin, the Kaiser's confidential servant, came to London with orders from his master to make all arrangements for war and to hoodwink his English friends into the belief that Germany's intentions were peaceful, when in point of fact all was ready for hurling the thunderbolt."

Maxmilien Harden, in his review *Zukunft*, in November, 1914, wrote: "This war has not been forced on us by surprise; we have desired it and it was our bounden duty thus to desire it. Germany wages war because of her immutable conviction that greater world expansion and freer outlets are due to her by right of her own works."

In August, 1914, the same writer said: "Why not admit what is and must be the truth, that between Vienna and Berlin everything was jointly prepared?"

In August, 1914, the *Lokalanzeiger* declared that Germany's object was "to take her stand as the mightiest nation, which would at last be in a position to give to the world such peace and prosperity as it chooses that they should enjoy."

Now, remembering Germany's gospel of force and frightfulness, her plea that necessity knows no law, her carefully organized war and peace machines, her enormous and costly system of espionage and intrigue, her immense armaments, her avowed intention to conquer the world, her record of treacherous diplomacy, her hatred of Russia and Britain and France, her steady persistence on the Bagdad Railway, her secret alliances with Turkey and Bulgaria, her building of her Fleet, her expansion of her own and the Austrian army, her expenditure on Zeppelins and poison gas and flame throwers, her secret siege artillery, her pushing of strategic railways to the Belgian border, her fortification of Flushing, and her purchases of gold; and remembering her three sudden attacks on Denmark, and Austria, and France; and remembering her contempt for "scraps of paper," and her contempt for the law of nations; and remembering her savagery and lawlessness on land and sea; and remembering the Kaiser's speeches and the thousands of books and articles abusing Britain and France; and remembering all that Germany hungered for and hoped to gain; and remembering that Russia, and France and Britain coveted nothing, had threatened nobody, and were unready and unwilling for war, what conclusion can we come to as to which nation is to blame for the agony and ruin which have come upon Europe since the end of July, 1914?

Who caused the war? Who threatened war, who preached war, who stood to gain by war, who had been for forty years preparing for war? Germany.

Blatchford

L

THE *SUNDAY CHRONICLE* AGAIN

I REMAINED with the *Weekly Dispatch* until about Midsummer of 1916, then, as there was some disharmony on political questions, I left. I was not sorry to have a short holiday, and the work had been hard. One week I remember as difficult as any in my experience. I had a serious attack of gout which had rendered me temporarily blind in one eye. I sat up in bed, in great pain, and wrote my seven columns in two most unhappy days, and on the afternoon of the second day the dining-room ceiling, just under my bed, fell with a crash and my wife and daughters narrowly escaped injury.

I was out of an engagement for six weeks and filled in the time writing a book on the war, which brought me a clear £300.

I had only just finished the book when Horatio Bottomley wrote asking me to do twelve short articles for *John Bull* and offering to send me, in advance, a cheque for £500.

The next day Mr. Hulton (the late Sir Edward) motored down to Horsham and asked me to write exclusively for the *Sunday Chronicle*. We sat on the lawn and talked about old times and about books and old friends and the war, and a half-grown cockerel, with few feathers and no tail, got on to my knee and went to sleep like a cat. We talked for an hour before we came to the point, and then we settled

matters in a few minutes, except as regards the Bottomley offer. That, Mr. Hulton did not seem to think I should accept. Finally, I said I always consulted my wife on business matters, and we agreed to take her opinion. She decided against the £500, and I think that, as usual, she was right. Some time in August I returned to the *Sunday Chronicle*, after an absence of twenty-five years.

In November of 1916 we moved from Horsham to a farm near Slinfold. Our arrival was inauspicious. By the time we had got the furniture in it was pitch dark and heavy rain was falling. The goods and chattels were heaped up in the big, strange dining-room. There was no fire and no gas. We had only guttering candles. My wife was taken suddenly ill and fainted. We were a mile from the village and did not know a soul. The lanes were ankle-deep in mud. If we could have found our way to an inn (there were no lamps) we could not have got a drop of brandy without a doctor's certificate, and there was no doctor. We were all very frightened; but we pulled through. In the morning we sat and repented of our folly. We had wanted to live in the country, and this was it.

If I may offer a word of advice to elderly city-dwellers bent on emigration to England, I should say, do not listen to the cozening fiend who camouflages as a house and estate agent. At the last he will sting you like a serpent. If he has a commodious Tudor residence one mile from the golf links and four miles from Furze-Hillocky Railway Station, turn it down. Shun it as the pestilence. It means pump water, no drainage, and a day's march to the nearest grocer's shop. It means, most likely, rats and draughty passages, and muddy roads and a clay soil, and a visiting doctor three miles off, on Mondays and Fridays so that one can only be ill by appointment. It means,

in the long winter, cold and solitude and a boredom allied to chronic melancholy.

Those happy homesteads on the wind-swept unwatered hills, where Farmer Purpletop grows peaches and bright cherries and takes an abiding interest in his pigs; those ideal English homes where the Brontë girl plays Beethoven and the Rubens girl milks the dappled kine are very pretty and appealing in the novel of rural life, but they would pall too quickly upon the urban mind. I would suggest keeping within an hour's railway journey of London or some other big centre, as it is advisable to run up now and again to Town just to remind yourself how much you hate it.

That was a terrible winter, one of the worst I have known. And our poor boys were in the trenches, our son amongst them, and there was no gleam of hope in the sky; no promise of peace.

LI

MY LAST CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

IN December of 1917 I did my last Christmas shopping. It was our custom to go to London just before Christmas in search of Christmas presents. For me it was a tedious business, for my wife it was otherwise. She loved shopping almost as much as she loved spring cleaning. Regent Street was her happy hunting ground, and while she enjoyed herself on the trail it was my rôle to fulfil the marriage vow: "forsake all others and keep only unto her." I remember that expedition because all the time I was in Town I was possessed of a feeling of unreality. It was not the crowds of shoppers who seemed unreal; it was myself. I felt as if I were a spirit returned to earth. I felt like the man in "News From Nowhere" when he realized that he had become invisible and inaudible to his fellow-guests in the festal hall. And, apart from my sick fancy, it is true that for the moving, gazing, gossiping West End crowd I was not there; that is to say no one saw me, knew me, no one heeded me. A ghostly experience; it arose perhaps from my brooding on the war. The shop windows glowed with colour and sparkled with gems, the shoppers—there were thousands of them—clustered thickly in the glare or drifted past like shadows with a ripple of voices and a lisp of feet, and I kept trying to realize that this was the festive season, but always coming back to a verse which haunted me: "Our only psalm on that

Christmas morn was the boom of the guns and the blast of the horn; but our welcome was warmer than pleasant. Our only meal was powdered steel, and the shrapnel gash which is slow to heal was my only Christmas present."

"I'm going into Liberty's," said my wife; "don't you move from here." Discipline is discipline. I was a well-trained husband. I knew my place. "My only meal was powder and steel—— This means an hour's sentry go." I moved slowly up my beat.

At the end of the hour I began to feel uneasy. If I went in I might miss my wife in the crush, and I could not watch all the doors. As it happened, she came out of a door to which my back was turned and, not seeing me, hurried up the street. A few minutes later she returned, and as I met her looked at me with flashing eyes and demanded why I had gone away when she asked me to wait. "Come, come," I said, "you hit one of your own size. There's a shop over there where they make real tea." "I thought you had wandered off. There's nothing striking in there, except the prices. I'm hungry. I saw a lovely Japanese screen; but I am not paying what they ask. Stockings are dear." And so to tea.

After tea we realized that we were both tired and went into a kinema to rest.

Oh, that theatre! Oh, that whirling, scurrying, unmeaning show, that surely was the weirdest part of the weird day-dream. What it was all about I cannot attempt to say. It was like a fevered and breathless nightmare. Squadrons of Mexicans and cow-boys chased each other on wild horses over wild prairies and wilder hills. Riders raced, guns fired, men fell, girls were abducted and rescued; a person in a slouch hat and decorated trousers, who might have been Ragtime Cowboy Joe, rode on horseback into a saloon and wrecked the chandeliers and mirrors

with his "forty-four," and when we came away was in the act of eloping with the general's daughter, and would probably be pursued along roads and over mountains and across rivers by police and sheriffs in motor-cars, and there would be more climbing and leaping and shooting, and then the show would begin all over again.

As my wife was staying the night with a friend and I was going home, we bade each other good-bye in Piccadilly, just as a group of shadows were fighting for seats in a 'bus. I thought she looked as weary as I felt and that we seemed a pair of grey-haired babes in a goblin wood. I was anxious, too, for usually when my wife went to London, Comrade Jerry lined up with an air-raid. But next evening she came home flushed and smiling, and when I said she must be tired after her visit to that noisy hustling Babylon she answered: "No, I had a lovely time. We went to a theatre. Mrs. Parsons is quite well. The Germans dropped a bomb on the line after our tram had left. If they had been five minutes sooner—— Why are you using the best teapot?" Of such mettle are the women of Albion.

So that was my last Christmas shopping and, unreal as the experience seemed, the impressions left were unusually vivid. For instance, I noticed as never before, how grotesque and absurd were the women's hats and how inconvenient and cumbersome their dress. And that as recently as 1917. Who engineered the revolution in feminine fashions? What brave woman first shortened her hair and skirts, discarded her ridiculous hat and allowed the air to reach her lungs? Evolution is supposed to be slow; but in how brief a time has it produced a new race of women! And what a happy change.

THE SOMME

IN September of the same year I was invited by Mr. W. H. Hughes, then Prime Minister of Australia, to join his party on a visit to the Australian front. On board our vessel as we crossed from Folkestone to Boulogne were Sir Douglas Haig, Admiral Beatty, Admiral Sims, Mr. Hughes, Lord Burnham, and the editor of the *Daily Mail*, Mr. T. Marlow. A squadron of destroyers steamed round us and a squadron of aeroplanes circled over us throughout the passage. We should have been a great prize for a submarine. But we were not attacked and got safely on to Amiens, where we put up at a slightly damaged hotel in a half-ruined street. There we got a good dinner and slept peacefully, the enemy having been driven back out of range and the Australians having captured the Big Bertha which had been used to shell Amiens.

The first of the many ruined villages our party saw was Villers-Bretonneux; the next, a few miles farther on, the double village of Warfusee-Lamotte. No pen, nor brush, nor camera could convey the full effect of those tragic and appalling ruins.

Villers-Bretonneux had been a pretty, comfortable, clean old country town, such a one, perhaps, as Billingshurst or Crawley. It had its little farms and elegant villas, its streets of shops, its trim and dainty

cottages, its well-stocked barns and orchards and its tasteful, affectionately tended gardens.

Its people lived thrifty, prosperous and pleasant lives, going off on holidays in their traps or motors for the day and a dinner in Amiens, or a picnic by the green banks of the Somme. It dozed like that, doubtless, in its sleepy contentment in the summer of 1914, when its corn was reddening and its fruit was ripening and Austrian archdukes seemed as remote from its destiny as Kubla Khan or the Black President of Hayti. We found it the broken husk of a ruined home, a poor toy trodden under the red feet of war.

Villers-Bretonneux had been shelled and stormed and shelled and stormed again. It had been bombarded and defended. It had been fought for and taken and fought for and retaken many times. It had been blasted by the bombs and cannon of three armies. It had been torn and burnt and hacked and shattered out of recognition. There was not a whole nor an unspoilt house or shop, barn or garden, church or office in the town. Hardly a roof was left, even a broken roof. The solid walls were smashed and riven. The bared brickwork scorched by high-explosive shells had the livid colour of raw flesh. Floors, gables, pillars, ceilings had been blown to splinters by the terrific force of the fire. Gardens were shell-holes, orchards were treeless, the church a heap of dust and rubbish. French and Germans, Germans and British, Australians and Germans had shelled it and fought in its streets and yards and cellars, with rifles and bayonets and knives and bombs. It must at the height of these desperate battles have been a very hell of flame and smoke and gas and splinters. It seems incredible that any soldiers could exist in that inferno. And now its wounded streets were empty and suggestively silent; and the silence and

the emptiness were so pitiful and dreadful that one could not pass through them with dry eyes.

Suppose that in the July of 1914 one had said to a merry French party at dinner in Bretonneux: "Four years hence your pretty town will be a hopeless ruin; not a French woman or man will be left in it; not a house will be habitable, and soldiers from London and Glasgow and Australia will fight the Germans to prevent them from destroying Amiens"—what a wild story would that have seemed.

As for the once-proud villages of Warfusee and Lamotte, their state was more terrible than that of Villers-Bretonneux. Had they been subjected to earthquakes and fire from heaven they could not have presented a more heart-rending and desolate appearance. But as we drew nearer to the Somme we found the work of destruction to have been more ruthless and complete. Their whole villages had been wiped out; nothing of them was left but shell-torn trees and heaps of debris. They had been burnt down, or blown up, so that not one stone was left standing on another.

We had passed by many such, and I think we were all too much oppressed and saddened to talk, when we caught a whiff of sound that made us all start, "The pipes, the pipes!"

It was a company of Highlanders on the march, the pipers at their head. I—well, I took my hat off. It was the only thing to do, and my companions did the same, and in silence and with beating hearts, we moved slowly past the line. Oh, the good Scots faces, grim or gay, the wild elation of the pipes.

I could have shouted, or danced, or cried, or—or anything. But being British I did nothing.

But it was a thrill.

The cemetery at Bray-sur-Somme was the loneliest and the most melancholy place I ever stood in.

Imagine it. Deserted, neglected, strewn thick with fallen leaves, with the sad scent of autumn in the air, with the grass uncut and the poor wreaths rotting. Then there were the signs of the battle. I don't think the cemetery had been wilfully shelled, but it had caught the spume and spray from the seas of fire that had beaten the surrounding houses into wreckage. The cemetery walls were gashed and scarred, and in places perforated. The coping was damaged. Some of the headstones were split and monuments knocked down. Dud shells lay here and there on the rank grass. Shrapnel had cut the branches of the overgrown trees so that many hung down the leafy and damp pathways, and their withered leaves rustled stiffly as they brushed my face or limbs in passing. That must have been a horrible sight when the houses were burning and roofs and walls were falling and the guns thundering and shells bursting and shrapnel and bullets wailing and screaming. As I tried to reconstruct the scene I thought of the dead in Sir Thomas Browne's essay who had lain so quietly "Under the drums and tramlings of three conquests" and of the dead in Swinburne's poem: "One shadow is shed on all their faces; one blindness cast on all their eyes."

Amongst the great family vaults and the lichened and bullet-scarred headstones of the older graves there were many of the plain white wooden crosses which mark the resting-places of French officers and soldiers who had died in the Great War. And I noticed that the old graves and the new, the graves of those who had died in their beds in the cottages and châteaux of Bray, and of those who had fallen with arms in their hands in the desperate Somme fighting, all had the same neglected desolate air. This Garden of Proserpine seemed very, very old and very damp and dark, and the poor dead seemed utterly deserted

and forgotten. Here and there a rose-tree had straggled across a tomb and dropped its delicate amber or coral petals on the weather-beaten, war-shaken stone. But there were few flowers to be seen, and though the trees had grown almost into a wood there was not a bird's note, nor even the sharp plaintive song of a robin, to be heard. It was the dimmest, dumbest and most mournful place of burial I have ever seen. A hushed, dark garden, wherein death seemed ominously cold and real and near. A wounded and dead village: "a very home of tears." Nothing I saw in France left upon my mind an impression so deeply sad as the cemetery of Bray-sur-Somme.

True, I have not forgotten and shall never forget the abandoned trenches. I think of them with a pitiful wonder. They were like narrow drains cut in the battered miry soil. Behind the lines of rusty barbed wire the parapets had crumbled away, the floors were ankle-deep in mud. The courage and endurance of the men who stood and fought and slept in those chilly, sodden ditches throughout the bitter winters of that ghastly war are almost too wonderful to believe. One of our boys told me that he and a very young soldier, weary and soaked with the rain, came upon a deserted trench in the darkness and crawled into a dug-out that was like an oven cut in the wet clay, and there they slept, clinging to each other for warmth. Both, he said, were faint with hunger and the youngster cried with misery and cold. It is a marvel how the men kept alive.

LIII

A CHANGE OF FAITH

IN November 1918 I went to Rosyth for the *Sunday Chronicle* and was present aboard H.M.S. *Malaya* at the surrender of the German Fleet. As the intentions of the Germans were not known our ships were cleared for action and our men at their stations. As I walked along the main deck and saw the crews standing by the six-inch guns I wondered with a smile just what would happen to me if the Germans opened fire. All was calm and bright, however, and that night we pressmen returned to London on the Admiralty train. It was a long ride, without food or drink, and so cold we could not sleep. And I missed the wild carnival of Armistice night in London, which, I understand, was a sight worth seeing.

In these loosely strung papers I have dealt lightly with some matters which to many readers may seem important, as, for instance, the spread of Socialism, and the origin and growth of the Labour Party. But the early years of the Labour movement, though of interest to students, have not much public appeal. The Labour Party is in being; it has arrived. The public are concerned less with its past than with its future, and that future is in other hands than mine. And if this book seems to be more of a love-story than a life, that is because to me love has always been the more vital and beautiful part of life. Many years ago I was talking with W. T. Stead, and when I

made some remark about the purpose of sex, he answered: "Sex is the true Sinai." That was to me a cryptic saying and I put my idea in my own way: "I mean that love and marriage are not a convenience or an experiment: they are a fulfilment." Stead agreed heartily. Well, to those who are neither covetous nor ambitious a happy union is the most precious gift of fortune. For me fame, title, power and wealth would be dust in the balance against the gold of a woman's love. I suppose that a man who wants to be a millionaire, or a film star, or a prime minister, or a king, is glad when he feels the coveted prize within his grip; but I should think he would soon be bored. Who would be a king, to be waited upon, dressed and undressed, saluted, trumpeted, toadied to and spied upon and be graciously pleased by the inescapable persecution? I should regard the lot of a healthy tramp on the high roads as preferable. Who would these fardels bear without a twin soul to cherish and delight him? How many successful men who have led loveless lives would wish to be born again to the mean worry and anxious labour they have suffered under and defeated? But when I have spoken to grey-haired widowed husbands of a future life their eyes have sparkled and I have not needed telling of their secret hope. As I have put it: "If there is another life I will seek my sweet friend and marry her again."

And that brings me to another subject, more attractive and arresting than any political issue: the subject of spiritualism. I had been all my life a materialist. I believed that the mind is the man and that the brain is the mind and that without matter there is nothing, and believing that I did not believe in a future life. Dust we are and into dust we return was my first faith. But I was interested in the question of a future life. I wanted to know. And one

day W. T. Stead invited me to lunch and talked to me of spiritualism. I was intrigued and astonished, and I came away much perplexed. I could not doubt Stead's sincerity, nor his sanity, nor his verity; and I could not believe the things he had told me. But I did make one tentative experiment. He said if I sat at my desk alone and laid the point of a pencil lightly on paper it would result in automatic writing. We had sat into the dusk of the evening, and when I reached our Fleet Street office it was in darkness and closed. I let myself in, went to my room and did as I had been told. But the pencil never moved. I waited there in the dark for some time and then began to speak aloud to my dead friends. There was no answer, and it dawned upon me that the situation was becoming creepy. So I went home and talked to my wife about it and she said she did not believe in spirits or a future life. And at that we left it. But I was still curious. I could not dismiss the earnestness of W. T. Stead.

It was the subdivision of the atom which first shook my complacent materialism. An atom which is a kind of minute solar system seemed an unstable foothold for a philosophy. I looked up the atom in the works of leading men of science. Flammarion said that "matter and energy become one." Sir Oliver Lodge said: "It now appears that an atom may break up into electric charges, and these again may some day be found capable of resolving themselves into pristine ether." My idea of matter was some substantial, unchangeable substance: a material. But an atom which breaks up into electric charges and then resolves into pristine ether seems to be guilty of conduct unbecoming a material entity. How could I remain a materialist when deprived of material? I had to get back to Pythagoras, who said: "The visible universe is composed of invisible elements."

If a leaden bullet is composed of electric charges, may not a human spirit be composed of something equally intangible—or tangible? I found myself as Carlyle put it, “standing on the bosom of nothing.” That was in 1920, when I was just turned sixty-nine.

In the following year, on the 19th of December, 1921, my wife died. The dear girl had a happy death. She never knew she was dying and she had no pain. She just fell asleep. The last time I saw her she was sleeping quietly, and she looked like a pretty child. There was a slight flush on her cheeks and one little white hand lay out on the green counterpane: “like an April daisy on the grass.” That was at midnight, and she died at six the next morning. I had gone to bed, for I was exhausted with watching. For the last week or more she would not let me out of her room by night or day.

When I got up on the morning of her death I found to my surprise that I did not believe she was dead. My materialism notwithstanding, I felt that my wife was alive. My daughters, who held the same materialistic views, shared my feeling. We could not believe that she was not. Perhaps it was because we had been so devoted to her, because she had so filled our lives. I began to ask myself if perhaps the spiritualists were right. I did what Lady Warwick did when the Socialist idea came to her. I read all the best spiritualist books I could get hold of. I read and thought steadily for a couple of years and then I wrote some articles in the *Sunday Chronicle* protesting against the harsh criticism and cheap ridicule to which spiritualists were subjected. Still, I was not convinced. I was only puzzled. The books had affected me as W. T. Stead’s talk had affected me. I told myself that all those gifted and honourable men and women could not be dupes or knaves. And—if they were right?

Then Mr. T. A. R. Purchas, Chairman of the Johannesburg Water Board, wrote and told me of his remarkable psychic experiences, and I wrote to him saying if he could get in touch with an African soldier killed in France perhaps he could find my wife who died in England. And within a few weeks, if the evidence was credible, he found her. But I was not yet convinced. I was only puzzled.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie of the National Psychic College called on me at my home in Horsham, and after some talk suggested that I should have a sitting with Mrs. Osborne Leonard, who was, they said, one of the best living mediums. I accepted, and Mr. McKenzie undertook to arrange the meeting. So, one Sunday in September 1923, Mr. McKenzie met me at Victoria and drove me out to Mrs. Leonard's house in Barnet.

I was introduced as Mr. Roberts. Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Leonard went off in the car, and Mrs. Leonard and I were left alone in the house. The room was an ordinary small suburban parlour, with a long bay-window looking on the road and a door opening into the hall. Mrs. Leonard drew the thick curtains and we sat down. I sat about a yard from her, on her left front. I could have touched her with my hand. The room was not in complete darkness. After a few minutes I could have read a book or written a letter. The features of the medium were clearly visible.

I was deeply interested, but not at all excited. I was watchful, rather sceptical; but not hostile. I had an open mind, but was not in a credulous mood. While Mrs. Leonard was falling asleep I was asking myself: "Is this a trance, or sleep? Why should she go to sleep?" But I liked the lady. She looked tranquil and good. My mental attitude can be gathered from something I wrote four days prior to

the sitting, to an old friend in Manchester. "I go to London on Sunday to see the medium. I'll let you know what happens. I have little faith. I don't at all expect to get any solid evidence; but I have promised to go." That does not suggest emotion or credulity.

After a few minutes the control, Fedá, spoke. She said: "There is a lady here to see you. She calls you by a name beginning with B. Not the long name, the short name." I was not expecting that. But I thought perhaps the medium knew I was Robert Blatchford and not Mr. Roberts.

The next message did not mean much to me at the time. It was a statement of fact which had to be proved. And it was proved.

Then Fedá said something which made me sit up and take notice: "She is trying to put her hand in your breast pocket. She says she is pleased you have that in your pocket; but the little one is gone a long way."

I had a pocket wallet in which I carry two of my wife's portraits. One is a carte size and was taken just before we married; the other a small snapshot taken in 1915. The small one was not in my pocket at the time I sat with Mrs. Leonard. It was in South Africa. How could Mrs. Leonard, or Fedá, know that? I began to think hard.

The sitting lasted ninety minutes and I got many messages, all so correct that I could not explain them away, but I need not repeat them here. I have given them in my book "More Things in Heaven and Earth." One incident, though, I must not pass over.

Fedá had just made a remark when, from a few feet distant from the medium, my wife's own voice spoke directly to me. She said, in eager anxious tone: "Bob, I'm here. I am with you, Bob." Before

I could recover my presence of mind Feda spoke again and I lost the chance to reply. Did I imagine my wife had spoken? She had been dead nearly two years and I had never since heard or expected to hear her voice. This incident, crowning all the other messages, broke down my scepticism. I left for home convinced that I had been in communication with my wife. Another sitting, in the following June, confirmed the impression. I need not say how the conviction helped me to gain my serenity. I should be very unhappy if I were convinced that the splendid hope was a delusion.

And yet—does it not seem too good to be true? Oh, believe me, I cannot shake nor ignore the evidence. My doubt is quite illogical and therefore quite human. And—we shall all know some day—perhaps. Old people love to look back, they say. It may be because they have much to look back upon. But if the promise of the soul's reawakening holds good, there is a larger joy in looking forward. To our next meeting then?

Of mere worldly affairs I have not much more to tell. I left the *Sunday Chronicle* at New Year, 1924, and worked for the *Sunday News* till March, 1927. Since then I have been a free-lance, and, so far, have done better than I expected. A success due in a great measure to the energy and skill of my agent, Mr. Charles Lavell. It remains for me to express my thanks to my editors for their courtesy and encouragements. Messrs. J. Heddle and P. Hord, of the *Sunday Chronicle*; Messrs. Maas and Williams, of the *Sunday News*; Mr. Thomson Hill, of the *Sunday Graphic*; and Mr. Archer, of the *Manchester Evening News*. It is a pleasure to work for editors so considerate and friendly.

PERSONALIA

THE very flattering preface by my old friend, A. M. Thompson, calls for some comment. When Major Macfall said that intellectual honesty is not a journalistic quality I felt that it was a half-serious gibe, like the things some throw off carelessly about women, or red-headed men, or commercial travellers. I am an old journalist; but I don't know much about a newspaper office, and in my forty-five years' service have met few journalists. But I am rather proud of being a journalist and am jealous for the honour of the profession. When my old friend says I am not a real journalist because I will not write to order he lays himself open to the answer: "Neither would you." No bribe or persuasion would induce A. M. Thompson to "lie in print," as Kipling's naturalist said, and I don't believe there are many journalists who would. I can conceive that some of the "big noises" behind newspapers or syndicates may have axes to grind and may, perhaps, not be scrupulous as to how they use them. But as there are journalists of many varieties, honestly holding diverse opinions, it should not be difficult for an editor or proprietor to find a congenial staff without asking anyone to perjure his soul or stifle his conscience.

I have been twitted sometimes for my idealism. I read one comment which said: "I never did understand where Blatchford found his working men."

And the simple answer is that I found them in the workshops where I worked with them. In the brushshop, when I was an apprentice, there were a few men who would break out occasionally for a day's drinking. But there was no harm in them. They worked hard. They were decent and intelligent. They did not neglect their homes. So amongst the hard-drinking, long-service men in the Army I found no meanness and very little rowdyism. Again, the men on the Weaver Navigation, where I worked for seven years, were almost to a man diligent and capable workmen. In all the years I knew them, and amongst the hundreds of men I knew, I cannot remember one who ever showed the worse for drink. In the Army the language was often lurid; but amongst the workmen I knew in the 'sixties and in the 'eighties, I hardly ever heard a coarse or profane word. Perhaps I have been especially fortunate in my experiences; but I can say in defence of my idealism that amongst the crowds of men and women and boys and girls I have known I can remember very few who were really bad. I find it much pleasanter to think of the many who were nice to know than of the few with whom I could make no friendly or tolerable contact. My dear old friend, the Rev. J. Cartmel Robinson, once said he had a soft spot in his heart for the scoundrels. I think it good wisdom on our earthly pilgrimage to look rather for the flowers than the weeds. I have found loyalty and kindness, and love and humour in most unlikely places. Mercutio's rebuke to Benvolio is worth remembering: "Thou art like one of those fellows that when he enters the confines of a tavern claps me his sword upon the table and says, God send me no need of thee." Such action is no overture to peace. Being myself of a sociable and friendly nature I may use an American figure of speech and say: "I never pack a gun."

But the idealist needs have more philosophy in him than Touchstone's Corin, for he is exposed to rude shocks in an imperfect world. As a young enthusiast I used to think that as I grew older I should acquire valuable knowledge of human nature, and so be equipped with a shining armour of experience and facts. I got the experience. The trouble was that the facts were so numerous, so surprising and so contradictory, and the experiences so disconcerting, unexpected and unreasonable, that instead of gaining confidence I lost it. Our fellow-creatures, poor things, will not live up to our ideals. They are so distressingly complex, so bafflingly mutable. Unless one has philosophy and a touch of humour, how will it fare with the evangelist who sets out to find the Holy Grail and is offered instead the class war? Dr. Pangloss, confronted with such disillusion, retired gracefully to the seclusion of the country and grew cabbages. I have preferred to grow roses and to write innocent and quiet essays which the critics enthusiastically ignore to the public loss and deprivation of posterity. "Roll on, mad world, roll on. Don't mind me. Roll on."

When I was out in that uncomfortably exposed position known as "The Public Eye" I got my full share of bouquets and other less acceptable missiles. Once, after I had spoken at a large and enthusiastic meeting, one of the committee asked a young factory girl: "What did you think of our Nunquam?" And the darling answered: "He looks like a good waltzer." Had she said I reminded her of Gladstone at his best, or described me, in Stead's words, as "The people's Plato," the compliment would have left me cold. But at the age of fifty to look like a good waltzer set my masculine vanity aglow.

And, about a year ago, my daughter met a retired Naval Commander who told her that when he was

hunting U-boats in the North Sea and things looked black, the young officers used to say: "Wait till we get Blatchford's article," and the article always cheered them up. "We had great faith in your father's wisdom and sincerity," the Commander said, "and he never let us down. We used to drink his health. He was a friend." This generous tribute, coming in later years, when the "Public Eye" is shut to me, is very welcome.

I like to think, too, of the hustling combative years, when the *Clarion* was new and I found counsel and sympathy in the company of my true friends. In those unpropitious times A. M. Thompson and William Palmer and I used to take long walks and indulge in high hopes and heartening talks. I rejoice to know that those two real comrades are still with me, and I love to look back on the days of our hearty communion.

The German Junker's sneer about the "ex-brush-maker" amuses and tickles me, too. I like to think of the little brushmaker's apprentice, in the 'sixties, wheeling a barrow-load of brooms along a smoky street. Who would have believed that ill-dressed lad would grow up to set all England talking? But he did. "Merrie England," "God and My Neighbour" and "England and Germany" were national sensations. I am mildly proud of the little brush-boy. He intrigues me. I was having my hair cut some thirty years syne when Figaro remarked: "You've a head would puzzle a barber, sir." I answered gravely: "It has puzzled others as well as barbers," and left the artist guessing darkly.

LOOKING BACKWARD

YES, we like to look back, and I can look back for three-quarters of a century. I am writing this in the first week of my eightieth year. I must be one of the oldest working journalists in England. I did not get my chance till I was thirty-four, and I have been a journalist for forty-five years. And I have never been without work. And I don't want to be without work. I love it. Yes, and if any young reader wonders what it feels like to be "going on eighty" I can answer quite frankly that to me "it feels quite good." That may surprise the bright young things; but it is the simple truth. By the tale of years I am an old man, a very old man, but I don't feel old. I have not lost my interest in life. I have not lost the precious faculty of wonder. The Lord has kept my memory green. I have not lost my fairies. I am more than ever in love with my wife. I enjoy literature and the cricket news and music and poetry and detective stories and gardening and the beauty of clouds and trees. Mentally and spiritually I am as young as I was at forty—and younger, happier, more cheerful, more serene. No, I don't feel old. I never think of myself as an old man.

Age has one big advantage over youth. It does not want its fortune told. As a young man I was anxious, anxious about the future. Could I find

work; could I make a home; could I marry and make my wife happy? The future was uncertain. I could not see my way. I had no education, no trade, no money or influence. What was waiting for me hidden in the mists of the unknown years? Now I know. I can repeat, and do repeat with smiles, an epitaph I came across as a boy:

I've lived my life, I've said my say,
 I've wed my wife; I've had my way;
 And every dog must have his day,
 And I've had mine; says Johnny Grey.

And the old man asks for so little. Does not want to rule the roost and call the tune and swagger in the limelight. Does not, as old Walt Whitman said, "want the constellations any nearer." Is not worrying about posterity. Does not mope and grizzle because he is not as famous as Charles Dickens. Would not give the price of a cigarette to *be* Charles Dickens. Does not care the beard of an onion who wrote Shakespeare's plays, so long as he may read them.

But I should rather like to be an artist, so that I could paint skies and trees. It must be heavenly to paint trees. However, next time I come, perhaps, next reincarnation. Besides, I can look at the trees and glory in them. My trees.

"And what do you see, or think about, old gentleman," ask the bright young things, "when you do your looking back?"

All the precious things, my dears. Sweet children, charming girls and gracious women, happy boys and men of goodwill. Bands playing, regiments marching, gaily lighted ball-rooms and gardens glad with roses and sweet peas; friends with smiling faces, wives and daughters with healing hands and caressing

voices; blue seas and buttercup meadows; a grey-haired, sleepy parson asking: "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" a jolly and still sleepier doctor calling down the stairs: "A fine daughter, Mr. Blatchford;" all the trivial, pretty, humorous things that make life worth while. Yes, the old man's past resembles a bright and cheerful picture gallery: longer, more spacious and more colourful than that of any youth. Remember, my bright young friends, that we have been young; but you have not been old. We have the advantage there. We have been twenty; but you have yet to be eighty. We have won and worn the roses of your desire. We offer you our sympathy and generous praise while in all gentleness we deprecate your scorn.

I do not wish to be young again—not in this old world. Except to the foolish and the obdurate age brings contentment and modesty. We have danced and we have paid the piper. We have won and we have lost. And we have tried to keep our heads and our tempers. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," we are told.

The wise take fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks. The others have to learn. When success has puffed them up, when vainglory and self-righteousness have almost made them into prigs, the fates step in and punch them on the solar plexus and kick them on the seat of honour and trip them by the heels and roll them in the mud and jump upon their faces and mop the puddles with their hair until they rise up sore and sorry and filled with true knowledge of life and an understanding pity for their fellow-sinners. Experience is a stern school; but one remembers its lessons. They are thoroughly well rubbed in.

Life has been kind to me, kind beyond my deserving.

I will not dissemble nor cloak my sins; but when I read my beloved Litany and remember the work of my head and hands, I can repeat without blushing the golden sentences: "That it may please thee to succour, help and comfort all that are in danger, necessity and tribulation. That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall." And I will venture to claim that I have been an honest writer and a loyal Englishman. England has many worthier sons; but few who more dearly love her.

I always disliked publicity and am happy in my retirement. I have a garden rich in roses, a house well stored with books, music to the heart's desire, memories sad and sweet, like "apples of gold in pictures of silver;" singing birds and noble trees. The fates have spared me many dear old friends, and my two wonderful daughters have risen up and *made* me blest.

My wife's mother, my mother-in-law, Ann Crossley, a domestic servant, married to a mechanic (good man and true), was serene with an old-time piety. Her soul was innocently gay as a flight of butterflies over a lavender bed. She had a precious simple wisdom, and she told me one day, freakish, defiant, impatient creature as I was: "It is good that we cannot have all our wishes granted." Those were winged words. The passing years have proved them. Though I still regard the religions and politics of the world with a sad but respectful astonishment, I remember that if the mills of the gods grind slowly they grind uncommon small.

When you and I beyond the veil have passed,
 Oh, but the long, long time the world shall last
 Which of our coming and departure heeds
 As the sea's self should heed a pebble cast.

LOOKING BACKWARD

Shall I close with Tiny Tim's benediction: "God bless everybody"? Or shall I, being of harder grain and coarser clay, say, "God bless everybody, except——" Well, be it as God wills. Tamam!

INDEX

A

- Adams, Private, and his career, 132-136
- Albert, King of the Belgians, informed of "inevitability" of war with France, 246
- Aldershot, regiment transferred to, 118-120
- Alliances and *Ententes*, facts regarding, 243
- Anglo-Russian *entente* signed, 243
- Apprenticeship at Halifax, 45
- Armistice night in London, 260
- Army friendliness contrasted with aloofness of politicians, 183
- Army, the, cast-iron routine of, 142 compared to a university, 120
- Army manoeuvres, attended by author, 221
- Arthur, Mrs., and her general shop, 27
- Audacious* sunk by a mine, 226
- Audiences, in what they differ from crowds, 206-207
- Australian front, visit to, 255
- Austro-German alliance, the, 243
- Autobiographies, author on a defect of, xvii-xix
- ### B
- Bagdad Railway, building of, 244
- Ballin, Herr, object of his mission to London, 247
- Barnes, domestic worries in, 181
- Beaconsfield, Lord, secures "peace with honour," 161
- Beatty, Admiral, visits Australian front, 255
- Belgian refugees in London, 242
- Bell's Life* becomes a penny daily paper, 170
- engagement on, 170
- incorporated with *Sporting Life*, 180
- the Editor and Blatchford, 171-173
- Bembridge Fort, a shindy at—and an inquiry, 104-107
- Bernhardi, General von, publishes "Germany and the Next War," 244, 247
- Bethmann-Hollweg, Herr von, insolent speech by, 245
- Beyens, Baron von, informed of imminence of war, 246
- Big Bertha gun captured by Australians, 255
- Bismarck, Prince, responsible for wars of 1864, 1866, and 1871, 243
- Blatchford, Mrs., senior, character sketch of, 2-6
- death, 16
- leaves the stage and works as dressmaker, 43
- Blatchford, Robert, a retrospect, 271-275
- a tramp from Yarmouth to London, 62 *et seq.*
- accepts work in Cheshire, 159
- acknowledgments to his various editors, 266
- and the *Clarion*, ix, 193 *et seq.*, 208, 209 *et seq.*, 215
- and the Countess of Warwick, 209-213
- attacks orthodox religion, 201

I N D E X

- Blatchford, Robert (*continued*):
 behind the scenes at pantomime, 16
 birth date of, 1
 breaks his indentures and narrowly escapes arrest, 62, 109
 called up with Reserves, 161
 change of faith, 261-266
 childish amours, 34-35, 41
 commission from the *Daily Mail*, 221 *et seq.*
 connexion with the *Sunday Chronicle*, vii-viii, 180-182, 184, 185, 249, 250
 cycling accident, 214
 difficulties with Welsh language, 155
 dislike of public speaking, 198, 205
 enters journalism, 170
 enthusiasm for Socialism, and a sequel, 191-193
 essays, fiction writing, 169
 favourite authors of, x, 37, 42, 167, 169
 his last Christmas shopping, 252-254
 indifference to politics, xiii, 222
 innocent flirtation at Popton, 145
 learns what is expected of a lance-corporal, 104-107
 marriage, 164 *et seq.*
 meets his future wife, 2, 46
 mess caterer at Popton, 143
 narrow escape from death, 124-125
 nominated as Socialist candidate for East Bradford, viii
 produces an opera, 192
 promotion as sergeant, 118
 seeks employment and takes a second walking tour, 154-160
 shadowed in Ireland, 184
 success as free-lance, 266
 suspected as a German spy, 233-234
 takes the Queen's shilling, and is sworn in, 78, 80
 theatrical career, 17-24
- Blatchford, Robert (*continued*):
 transferred to the Reserve, 153
 visits slums of Manchester, 186-189
 visits his mother and narrowly escapes arrest, 109-110
 why he became a Socialist, 36 *et seq.*
 wins £5 and Gold Guns and Crown, 161
 writes for the *Weekly Dispatch*, 232 *et seq.*, 249
 writing under difficulties, 249
- Blatchford, M. (brother), 5, 6, 43
 and foundation of the *Clarion*, 193
- Blatchford, Mrs. Robert (*see also* Crossley, Miss), author's tribute to, xviii
 death, 263
 her love of shopping, 165, 252
 home life, 222
 illnesses, 166, 250
 Spiritualism discussed with, 262
- Blatchford, Winifred (daughter),
 birth of, 167
- Blue Water School, the, and objections of, 226
- Boer War, outbreak of, 200
- Bottomley, Horatio, desires articles for *John Bull*, 249
- Bower Theatre, the, recollections of, 18-20
- Bowers, "Mother," author renders a service to, and her gratitude, 128-130
- Boxing, a lurid article on, and an irate deputation, 178-179
- Bray-sur-Somme, the cemetery at, 257-259
- Brearly, Miss Lizzie, introduces Blatchford to his future wife, 46
- Bright, John, threatens libel action against *Sunday Chronicle*, 181-182
- Bright, Private, disarms a violent recruit, 134-135
- "Britain for the British," published, 200
- Britain, neutrality of in 1864, 243

I N D E X

- Bryan, Private, journey from Texas to join the Reserves, 163
- Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," first book read by author, 41-42
- Burnham, Lord, visits Australian front, 255
- C
- Caerwys, bi-lingual Welsh maids at, 155
- Carlyle, influence of his works on author, 169
- Celeste, Madame (actress), at Portsmouth Theatre, 23
- Charles, Sergeant, first impressions of prove false, 149-151
- Chester Castle, last spell of service at, 161-163
- Chesterton, G. K., tribute to Blatchford, x
- Childhood days, 7-9, 38-42
- Christmas Eve, thrilling experience on, 108-110
- Churchill, Right Hon. Winston, opinion of Blatchford's articles, 225
- Cinderella Club founded, 189, 190
- Clarion, the, article on a ball at Warwick Castle—and the sequel, 209-213
- becomes a limited company, 208
- effect of Great War on circulation of, ix
- foundation of, viii-ix, 193, 195 *et seq.*
- offices transferred to London, 208
- series of accidents to members of Board of, 214
- Clarion Fellowship (*see* Fellowship)
- Clemenceau, M., pre-war interview with Sir E. Grey, 226
- Cobbett's grammar, author's indebtedness to, 161, 168
- Communism, views of author on, 218-220
- Corri, Dominique (grandfather), 5
- Corri, Eugene (uncle of the boxing referee), 27-28
- Country, the, advice to would-be dwellers in, 250
- Crane, Dr. Frank, "The Looking-Glass" by, cited, 68-69
- Cricket, author's last match, 231
- Crimean War, early recollections of, and changes following, 10 *et seq.*
- Crossley, Miss Sarah, introduction to, 46
- marriage to Blatchford, 164 *et seq.*
- Crowds, psychology of, 206
- Curtin murder recalled, 183
- D
- Dagan, Private, in trouble, 104-106
- Daily Mail*, publishes author's articles on the German menace, 224-229
- Daly, Colour-Sergeant, and a new recruit, 132
- Dartmoor, military manoeuvres at, 126
- Democracies, Anatole France on, 201
- Derby Lord, and death sentences in the Army, 182
- Dewey, Admiral, von Goetzen's admission to, 246
- Dickens, Charles, influence of his works on author, 37
- "Dictatorship of the proletariat," real meaning of, 219
- Dogger Bank affair, 244
- Dolan, Larry, and his failing, 97-99, 101-102
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, "The Curse of Eve" by, 167
- Doyle, Tim, as unconscious comedian, 30, 97 *et seq.*
- Drama, old-time, 19-20
- Dunn, "Dicky," and his Halifax fruit-shop, 51
- E
- Edward VII, King, death of, 229
- German charge against, 243
- Evans, Private Evan, fights Buffalo Adams, 135-136

I N D E X

F

- Fairs, their fascination for youth, 44
- Fay, Edward Francis, accident to, 214
and the *Clarion*, 193, 208
death of, 214
joins staff of *Bell's Life*, 175-176
walking tour in Ireland with, 214
- "Fellowship, The *Clarion*," and its object, 202
becomes an organization, 202
- Fisher, Lucy, recollections of, 14-15
- Fiske, Mrs. Lucy, kindness to author, 64-66
- Flushing, Germany orders Holland to fortify, 245
- France, Anatole, dictum of criticized by author, xviii
- Franco-Russian alliance, the, 243
- Friendships of youth, reflections on, 55-61

G

- Gargery, Mrs., and her "impartial" treatment, 40-41
- George, Right Hon. D. Lloyd, and a "war scare," 224
refuses needed reinforcements, 227
- Gerard, Mr., and gold purchases by German Imperial Bank, 247
- German Fleet, surrender of, 260
- German menace, danger of, unrealized in England, 223, 234-235
views of politicians and the Press on Blatchford's articles, 224 *et seq.*
- Germany, declares war, 232, 247
facts proving forty years' preparation for war, 243-248
Navy Bill of 1900, 244
- Gipsies, author's fortune told by, 1, 108
- Glasgow, peace celebrations in, 15
- "God and my Neighbour," publication of, 201

- Goetzen, Rear-Admiral von, foretells war, 246
- Gould, Gerald, excerpt from poem by, cited, 160
- Great War, author's book on, 249
question of responsibility for, 243 *et seq.*
world changes resulting from, 203
- Grey, Viscount, and the German menace, 225-226
- Grierson, General, his salutation to Blatchford, 183

H

- Haig, Sir Douglas, visits Australian front, 255
- Haldane, Lord, mission to Germany, 245
- Halifax, a fruitless journey to— and an experience, 109-110
an auspicious day, 46
an episode at, 34-35
author meets his destined bride: an unspoken vow, 118-119
glamour of, 53
marriage at, 164 *et seq.*
mother's tramp to, 43
- Hall, Mr. (master printer of *Bell's Life*), 177
- Hamilton, General Sir Ian, chats with Blatchford, 183
- Harden, Maximilien, on desire of Germany for war, 247
- Hardie, J. Keir, on a "ridiculous blunder" by Blatchford, 225
- Harrington, Mick ("Micky Begad"), 138
- Harris, Mr., acting editor of *Sunday Chronicle*, vii
- Harrison, Private, career of, 14, 134
- Hedde, J., acknowledgment to, 266
- Heligoland ceded to Germany, 244
- Hill, Thomson, acknowledgment to, 266
- Home Rule expedition, author's, 181, 183
- Hord, P., acknowledgment to, 266
- Horsham, removal from, 250

INDEX

- Hughes, W. H., Prime Minister of Australia, visits Australian front, 255
- Hulton, Mr., and Blatchford, vii-viii purchases *Bell's Life*, 169 starts *Sunday Chronicle*, 180-182 tribute to Blatchford at a staff dinner, 173
- Hulton, Sir Edward, and a threatened libel action, 182 re-engages Blatchford, 250 visits a slum hovel, 189
- Hythe, author attends School of Musketry at, 124-126

I

- Independent Labour Party, inception of, ix, 199
(See also Labour Party)
- Ireland, visit to, and its object, 181-184 walking tour in, 214
- Irish doctor, an eccentric, 112-117
- Irish psychology, puzzle of, 183
- Ison, Sergeant Thomas, enlists author, 76-81

J

- Johnson, "the Perpendicular Recruit," eccentricity of, 89-91
- Jones, Kennedy (of *Daily Mail*), and the German menace articles, 223-224
- Journalism, ventures in (see under *Clarion*, *Daily Mail*, *Sunday Chronicle*, etc.)

K

- Kaiser, the, and the "inevitability" of war with France, 246 attempted secret alliance with Russia and France, 244 campaign of abuse and threats against Britain, 244
- Kiel Canal, acquired by Germany, 244 enlargement finished, 225, 247
- Kitchener, Lord, predicts length of war, 234

L

- Labour M.P.s, number returned in 1910, xiii
- Labour movement, leaders and cosmopolitanism of members, 199
- Labour Party, and Blatchford's articles, 225, 226 its future, 260
- Ladies of sorrow, 120-121
- La Liberté*, tribute to predictions of Blatchford, 227-228
- Lance-corporal, author appointed, 104
- Larette, Charlie ("The Grand Old Cackler"), 176, 177
- Lavell, Charles (author's agent), 266
- Lawes, Captain, and a newly appointed lance-corporal, 104-106
- Leonard, Mrs. Osborne, a sitting with, 264 *et seq.*
- Life after death, investigation into question of, 261-266
- "Lightning" drills the battalion, 92-96
- Literary Digest* of New York, on Blatchford's warning of war, ix
- Llandrillo, a wet walk to, 155
- Llanfyllin, the rough road to, 157
- Lokalanzeiger*, on Germany's objective for war, 247
- London, a Welshman's opinion of, 158 arrival in—and disenchantment, 70 *et seq.*
- Love, reflections on, and true medium of, 47-48
- Luck, success in life attributed to, 1, 2
- Lynch, Peter, criticizes relaxation of army discipline, 86
- Lyons, A. Neil, history of Blatchford's life by, 3

M

- Maas, Mr., acknowledgment to, 266
- MacArthur, Mr., opinion of Blatchford, viii

I N D E X

- Macfall, Haldane, on Robert Blatchford, vii
 tribute to Blatchford, xii, 267
- McKenna, Bombardier, on the social possibilities of Popton Fort, 141
- McKenna, Mr., and the *Daily Mail* articles, 224
- McKenzie, Mr. and Mrs. Hewat, interest author in Spiritualism, 264
- Macnamara, Private, and a cock pheasant, 126
- Macpherson, Fenton (foreign editor of *Daily Mail*), Blatchford's offer to, 223-224
 commissions war articles, 232
- Maidstone, birthplace of author, 7-9
- Manchester, slum areas of inspected, 186-189
- Manchester Guardian*, on "Merrie England," xiii
- Marlow, Thomas (editor of *Daily Mail*), visits Australian front, 255
- Marriage, 164 *et seq.*
- Materialistic views, author's, and how they were shattered, 261-263
- "Merrie England," cheap edition and its success, 196 *et seq.*
 huge sale of, xiii
 the Press and, xiii
 to whom dedicated, xii
- Mills, Miss (landlady at Halifax), 53
- Mockler, Sergeant, and an obstreperous recruit, 134
- Moltke, Count von, fiery utterances of, 246, 247
- "More Things in Heaven and Earth," author's, 265
- Mullins, Sergeant, hospital sergeant at Bembridge, 112-117
- N
- Naval Truce with Germany, a suggested, and how viewed by Bethmann-Hollweg, 245
- Navy League, Blatchford elected on committee of, and threatened resignations, 228
 demands supported by author, 225
- Newport, Isle of Wight, picket duty in, 101
- Newport, Mon., incidents at, 128-131
- Nilsson, Christine, sings at concert in Plymouth, 150
- 96th Regiment (the Manchesters), at Chester Castle, 161-163
- Norfolk, a "cat and dog dinner" in, 230
- Norris, Sergeant Joe, a woman's tribute to, 144
 amenities at Popton, 144, 147
 author's friendship with, 125
 introduces author to A. M. Thompson, 2, 169
 narrow escape from shipwreck, 146
- Northcliffe, Lord, first meeting with Blatchford, x
 sends author to France, 238
 visits hospital at Versailles, 241
- Northwich, home-coming after marriage, 164
 time-keeping at, 161
- O
- "Our Lizabeth" (sister-in-law), 166, 167
- Oxbury, Harry, reminiscences of, 26-27
- P
- Page, Private, an affray with the police, 115-117
- Palmer, William (artist of *Sunday Chronicle*), 186
 and the *Clarion*, 193
- Palmerston, Lord, overruled by Queen Victoria, 243
- Parker, Private E. T., is questioned by a sentry: his explanation, 30-32
- Parkhurst Barracks, arrival of recruits at, 82-83
 drill exercise at, 92-96
 routine of daily life at, 88-89

I N D E X

- Passports, a story of, 238-239
 Peace Party ridicules Blatchford, 226
 Pearce, Private, canteen waiter at Popton, 142-143
 Plymouth, a concert at—and a sequel, 150
 Pooley, Mr., appointed editor of *Bell's Life*, 175
 instance of his loyalty to his staff, 179
 Popton Fort, amenities of, 144 *et seq.*
 an artilleryman's description of, 141
 arrival at, 142
 Portsmouth, schooldays at, 38-42
 Portsmouth Theatre (the old), recollections of, 20, 23-24
 Preston, "Old Bill," recollections of, 28-29
 Public meetings, atmosphere of and effect on speakers and audience, 206-207
 Purchas, T. A. R., psychic experiences of, 264
- ### R
- Ranstead, William, financial support for the *Clarion* from, 207-208
 meets with an accident, 214
 Reds, the, their policy criticized, 219-220
 Revolution, author's description of, 219
 Rhayader, a letter awaits author at, 159
 Riley, Private William, and his career, 14
 Roberts, Lord, correspondence with, 228
 Robinson, Rev. J. Cartmel and "The Fellowship," 202
 friendship with, 268
 Rosyth, surrender of German Fleet at, 260
 Rushmoor, under canvas at, 118
 Russian troops in England: a canard, 232-234
 Ryan, Private ("the Beauty"), a shindy with a comrade, 104
 forswears drink but renounces his oath, 138-139
- ### S
- "Sailor," significance of term among soldiers, 99
 St. George's Barracks, a sleepless night in, 79
 Schooldays, 38 *et seq.*
 Scots Guards entrain for the Front, 235-237
 Serbia attacked by Germany, 244
 Shaw, Bernard, appreciation of Blatchford, x
 Sheldon, Sergeant-Major James ("Lightning"), at Parkhurst, 92 *et seq.*
 Shipwreck, narrow escape from, 146
 Siffleur, tale of a, 130-131
 Silly, John (schoolmaster), and his disciplinary method, 39
 Sims, Admiral, visits Australian front, 255
 Sinclair, Private, utters an aphorism, 121
 Sinclair, Sir William, efforts to save life of Fay, 214
 "Singing Linnet," the, an encounter with, 102-103
 Slinfold, inauspicious arrival at and subsequent troubles, 250
 Slingers, Private, and Buffalo Adams, 133
 Slum areas inspected: negligible effect of revelations, 186-189
 Socialism, author's conception of, 201
 influence of "Merrie England" on, xiii
 what it means, 37
 Socialist party, a distinguished convert, 209-213
 continuous propaganda of, 204
 early public attitude towards, 203
 Spike Island, how a captain killed time on, 152-153
 Spiritualism, author becomes interested in, and studies the question, 261-263
 Blatchford's sitting with a medium, and the result, 264-266
Sporting Chronicle, journalistic work for, 169

I N D E X

- Sporting Life* absorbs *Bell's Life*, 180
 Stage, the, in the 'fifties, 17
 Stead, W. T., review of "Merrie England" by, xiii
 interests author in subject of Spiritualism, 263
 talk on purpose of sex with, 260-261
 Stillborn children, Army regulation regarding, 128
Sunday Chronicle, articles deprecating criticism and ridicule of Spiritualists in, 263
 leader writing for, 180
 re-engagement on, 250
 reminiscences of Blatchford's connexion with, vii-viii
 secret of its success, 184-185
 threatened libel actions against, 181, 182
 Sunderland, Private R. L., and how he was saved from "violent and gory" death, 30-32
 Sutcliffe, J. D., accident to, 214
 Swine Market, Halifax, lure of two shops in, 51-53
- ### T
- Tannenberg, and German plot for world conquest, 244, 247
 Templemore and Spike Island, 152-153
 Theatrical career, author's, 17-24
 Theology of the 'sixties, instance of, 29
 Thompson, Alexander M., and the *Clarion*, viii, ix, 195
 author's first meeting with, 2
 introduces author to journalism, vii, xii, 170
 comments on article by Blatchford, 227-228
 marriage, 169
 resigns post on *Sunday Chronicle*, 193
 reviews novel by Blatchford, xix
 tribute to Blatchford, x
Toby (Yorkshire paper), paragraph writing for, 169
- Trenches of the Somme, 259
 Triple Alliance, the, 243
- ### V
- Valentine, Paul, stage manager of opera produced by author, 192
 Victoria, Queen, and British neutrality in the Prusso-Danish War, 243
 Villers-Bretonneux, before and after the war, 255-257
- ### W
- Walen, Mr., accompanies author to France, 238-241
 Wales, a Londoner's opinion of, 159
 Walking tours, pleasant and otherwise, 62 *et seq.*, 154-160, 214
 Wallace, Dr. Alfred Russel, and a phrenologist's "estimate" of Blatchford, xi-xii
 War, Britain's unpreparedness for, stressed, 226
 shortage of reinforcements, 227
 War levy, Germany's (1912), 246
 Warfusee-Lamotte, war havoc in, 257
 Warwick, Countess of, interviews Blatchford and joins the Socialist party, 209-213
Weekly Dispatch, author's connexion with, 232 *et seq.*
 "Whisky Bill," and his career, 139-140
 Williams, Mr., acknowledgment to, 266
 Windsor, Mr. (schoolmaster), and how he kept order, 40
 Wrentham, welcome hospitality at, 64-66
- ### Y
- Yorkshireman, The*, publishes story by Blatchford, 169
- ### Z
- Zukunft*, on necessity of world expansion for Germany, 247

